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GABRIELLE

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THE COMING OF GABRIELLE

WORKS BY GEORGE MOORE

LEWIS SEYMOUR AND SOME WOMEN

A MUMMER'S WIFE

A DRAMA IN MUSLIN

SPRING DAYS

CONFESSIONS OF A YOUNG MAN

ESTHER WATERS

ESTHER WATERS (PLAY)

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IMPRESSIONS AND OPINIONS

THE LAKE

THE STRIKE AT ARLINGFORD

MEMOIRS OF MY DEAD LIFE

HAIL AND FAREWELL:

I II III

AVE SALVE VALE

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AVOWALS

THE COMING OF GABRIELLE

HÉLOÏSE AND ABÉLARD

The Coming of Gabrielle

A COMEDY

BY

GEORGE MOORE

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PREFACE

Self-love, man's guardian angel, is averse from such sincerity as might lead us to attribute our failures to some broken thread or tangle in the mind's woof, directing our attention instead to the justice with which Nature frames her tallies, each special strength being balanced by a like weakness, and calling us to admire this marvellous accountancy, for which the French have a ready-made phrase, "*Le défaut de ses qualités.*"

Now one day whilst self-love was spinning specious theories that would lay bare my failure to write plays that pleased me, the friend walking at my side said, interrupting my subtleties: "All you say may be true, but you haven't given the seriousness to the writing of plays that you have to your narratives." His words pierced my conscience, and I said: "*The Strike at Arlingford* was written for no more inspiring reason than that Mr. G. R. Sims told a journalist he would contribute £100 to the Independent Theatre if I wrote a play in three acts. *The Bending of the Bough* was needed to secure an annual performance at the Irish Literary Theatre, the play we had counted on not being considered worthy of production. The writing of *Diarmuid and Grania* was undertaken for the pleasure of collaborating with Mr. W. B.

Yeats. The play founded on *Esther Waters* would not have been undertaken if a French friend had not come to tell me that a French actress wished to play the part. The first three acts are as good as the novel is, the two last were but tacked together while the play was rehearsed. Now I come to consider it, I can see that what you say is right: I have never put my back, as the phrase goes, into a play."

So did I answer my friend, and later in the evening, when he had left me, the memory of another play, *Elizabeth Cooper*, intruded itself; and on reviewing its chequered story (enough matter for a volume) I could not deny to myself that my own weaknesses, carnal and cerebral, were the true reason of my failure to write a play on a theme that should have inspired some pretty writing. "I gave it," I said, "to the Stage Society for production, though not half satisfied, and afterwards to a French friend for translation in a vain hope that—— But why think it all out again?" cried I, the pen dropping from my hand, for the melancholy story is far too long for telling here, and it is enough to say that my scatter-brained attempts to write plays ended in another folly, to staying in Paris on my way back from Moab to rewrite the poor little comedy in such French as I could call to mind, and nearly an act was achieved in the jargon; but my friend's tenancy ended before the new act could be put into rehearsal, and I returned to England broken-hearted, looking upon *Elizabeth Cooper* as part of the litter that every author leaves

behind, my misery of conscience continuing till an actress of great talent, Miss Auriol Lee, came to tell me that she was going to America and would like to produce *Elizabeth Cooper* there, the part of *Gabrielle* having always appealed to her. "Reproduce *Elizabeth Cooper?* Not for ten thousand pounds," I answered her, and began to ask her why I should wish to see a play acted, published, read, spoken of, that didn't correspond to the play I had in mind. "There is a plot and some dialogue, but nothing of me," I added pathetically, to which she replied, "A stitch here and a patch there." "A new play is needed," I said, and next morning the old temptation came upon me to write a play that would be like me, and in three weeks *Elizabeth Cooper* presented me with *The Coming of Gabrielle.*

As all artists, or nearly all, have known the pain of thinking one thing and writing another, for such is our fate, my fellows will apprehend the joy it was to me to watch the emergence of *Gabrielle,* recognising at every moment that the new work was of the same kindred as the pieces that inform the volume entitled *Memoirs of My Dead Life*—a volume that gave me so much pleasure to revise this year for a fine American edition that I added two new pieces and foretold in the preface that if any twentieth-century literature lingered on into the twenty-first century this volume would as likely as not be among the last stragglers—a prophetic utterance that should not lay me open to an accusation of vanity, my object not being to coerce but to remind my readers

that a writer can do no more than to maintain a standard that he set for himself and that they have approved of for the last fifteen years.

My introduction to the comedy might end here, but having written a play which pleased me, I would like to avail myself of this rare occasion to say my little say on a topic that seems, from its frequency in the newspapers, to interest everybody—the decline of the drama. It appears from the papers that I read last Sunday that the dramatic critics themselves cannot sit through the plays now in course of performance at the London theatres, and leave dejected, broken in spirit, after the second act, to return to their homes to write discourses on the almost universal stupidity to which, unfortunately, they are obliged to pander.

The articles of the discontented critics are concerned with the perennial problem of the actor manager, and the difficulties of obtaining enough rehearsals in the theatres that call themselves repertory theatres. State-subsidised theatres also occupy the pens of the critics, and everyone is certain that if some modifications were made, talent would return to the theatre. As certain are they as they ever were in the nineties, when the common critical announcement was that Wagner had made the writing of a bad opera from henceforth impossible. It was thought, too, in the same nineties, that Ibsen had hit upon a dramatic road that would lead everybody to Parnassus who cared to go there, even

Mr. ——. But it would seem that whosoever produces a masterpiece, so far from helping his contemporaries to go and do likewise, poisons their aspirations: till the masterpiece is born the majority of men and women write the music and literature of their own time, and Art continues her matronly march down the well-known ways; but on the advent of the masterpiece Art is thrown into dismay, the young attach themselves to the new formula, and the elders are broken-hearted, as well they may be, for from henceforth they are old fogies.

I remember well how the spell of the seduction of unity stole over me in the stalls of the Gymnase Theatre in Paris in the seventies, and the ravishment with which I watched the skill of the dramatist, Dumas Fils, introduce his characters into the same room one after the other, finding specious entrances and exits for all, and how my excitement at his handicraft was increased as the curtain rose again on the same furniture, not a table or a chair moved out of its place; the hand of God seemed in it all when on turning to the programme I learnt that the whole action of the play was comprised in the short space of a few hours. Maybe the play that astonished me out of my wits was *Monsieur Alphonse*, or maybe it was the work of some other craftsman, for there are always many about who can avoid soliloquies and asides. But to do this, and skilfully, does not carry the dramatist, so it would seem, any nearer to Shakespeare than he was before; an unpopular doctrine this is, almost a heresy, but I will dare to say that it

is better to write *Hamlet* with soliloquies and asides than *Monsieur Alphonse* without.

At that time a large volume of Restoration plays was in my hand constantly, and my scorn of their craft brimmed over when I noticed that not one or two, but sometimes five, changes of scene occurred in each act, and that asides and monologues were the almost common means of expression of these forlorn dramatists. It may be that I dreamed of astonishing the London public with plays composed in the manner of *Monsieur Alphonse*, and it may be that no such thought entered my head, and it matters to nobody what I thought, or think that I thought, of Mr. Jones' play, *Saints and Sinners;* it comes into my mind naturally, for it is the last play, or one of the last, written in our old English dramatic formula, come down to us, with some variations, from the sixteenth century—three, four, or five scenes in each act, a forest glade followed by a parlour, a parlour by a street scene, a street scene by a lady's boudoir. The reader must think out for himself where the dramatist might have placed his fifth scene—in a cottage on a lonely heath, by the seashore, or in a tavern. It matters not where the scenes are placed; it's enough to say that all these changes were made within sight of the audience, the side scenes being pulled away by the scene-shifters. The craft of *Saints and Sinners* must have seemed to me very gross (after a long sojourn in France it could not seem otherwise), and it may be that once again I indulged myself in a dream of a play in three acts, in

which the whole action would be confined to a parlour, each act comprising fourteen exits and entrances. Indeed, it could not have been else than that my thoughts turned to such a play, for the belief of everybody in the nineties was that to recapture Shakespeare we must denounce monologues and asides. Strange are the beliefs of men; but I am meditating a history, so to continue.

It was in the late eighties or the nineties that Ibsen began to be spoken of and *The Doll's House* was produced; and it was noticed at once that the master allowed himself to drop into short soliloquies, but these, it was confidently predicted, would disappear as the master developed his craft. And for once the critics were right in their predictions; Ibsen forbore henceforth to soliloquise, to everybody's great delight, for everybody's delight in Art is in an externality of no moment whatever. Nobody remembered that the most beautiful things in Shakespeare, and the most real, are the soliloquies, and no thought was given to the fact that Ibsen's earlier plays (the plays in which he used monologues and asides as frequently as Shakespeare) are the most beautiful, and of all the most real. The master has never expressed himself better than in some of the monologues in *The Pretenders*.

But critics are not usually interested in the result, but in the means, and one of the master's greatest works was alluded to as "a youthful indiscretion," the reason being that for the last twenty years the critics have been busy cutting and pruning and

making ready the road for the feet of the young Parnassians, who have, according to the Sunday papers, failed to "play up." The critics stand waiting; the monologue has been felled, the aside has been grubbed up, and no doubt if a Don Quixote and a Sancho were sought in this journalistic reformation they would be found, for these are everywhere; but in finding them I should not escape a charge of attacking contemporaries who have, perhaps, on occasions spoken well of my work. It will be well, therefore, to think of other designations that can point to nobody, and on returning from the window I bring back a remembrance of a lantern and a post-box; as nobody, not even the most invidious, can fix these names upon men now living amongst us, I will call upon them if their opinion should be needed.

The afternoon tea had just come in and I was filling a cup when a ring came at the front door, and who do you think my visitor was, reader? None other than my old friend Lantern. You will understand easily that it was delightful to me to hear the maid-servant announce him; you can see me, no doubt, in your mind's eye start from my chair, and hear me beg of him to share my tea. He had not been to see me for a long time, and in his apologies *The Brook Kerith* happened to be mentioned. "But, my dear Lantern," I said, "my affection for my friends is not dependent upon the fact that they read or do not read my books." "My case is worse than not having read *The Brook Kerith*," said Lantern in a very grave tone. "The truth is, I couldn't get on

with it." "Now how was that?" I asked, tickled in my incurable curiosity; and having always clung on to the belief in Lantern's shrewdness I was a little disappointed with the reason he gave for not being able to get on with *The Brook Kerith.* It appears that all the long pages about Joseph of Arimathea put him past his patience, for he wanted to know what I thought about Jesus and Paul. It was on my lips to remark that if I had begun with Jesus I could have escaped barely from the charge of rewriting the gospels, but not wishing to embarrass Lantern (I love all lanterns, be they bright or dim), I fell back upon Heine's celebrated answer to Berlioz, who came to see the lonely poet when he was dying: "Always original, Berlioz." At which remark Lantern's wick spluttered in its socket for a moment, but it flared up quickly, and we fell to talking of Shakespeare, passing on to the way of the drama, the lighting of which had been my friend's care for many years.

It may well have been that he asked me if I were writing a play, and if that was his question, I answered that the modern play was so strict a convention that the form would have to be enlarged, broken up, as the old English comedy was scrapped about thirty years ago. Lantern asked me why I did not undertake the task of writing something different from the ordinary play, but as nothing would be gained by noticing his irony, I answered that it required many years to create a new convention, and that perhaps no single man could do this, but a generation of writers. " 'Not

only the man, but the moment is required,' as Matthew Arnold has put it. He might have said 'men' instead of 'man,' for no man creates a literary tradition." "But a man can start one," replied Lantern. "Do you think so?" I asked. "Are you sure?" He answered, "Ibsen," and we talked for some time, myself claiming that the Ibsen formula could be discovered in France, the gist if not the spirit of it at least. In all these debates many words are wasted, and to bring to an end an argument in which neither was interested, I remarked that if I had to begin my life again and my lot was cast in the theatre, I should not be satisfied with following the rut, but would seek (unconsciously perhaps, but I should seek) new formulas—the old bottles would not have satisfied me for the new wine, if I had any. "In what direction would you have sought the new formula?" Lantern asked. "Or do you think it would have come of itself?" "The new form," I replied, "would come unconsciously in response to some personal need." "Can you tell me the need, or indicate it?" "Yes," I answered, "I think I can do that."

"The straitened form into which the drama has fallen would have set me thinking how it might be widened, and my take-off would have been the five-act comedy of our ancestors, each act consisting of three, four, perhaps five, different scenes, changed within sight of the spectator. This form would allow of more story, more variety, in a word, more life. If I can rely on your patience?" Lantern nodded acquiescence. "The stream of story,"

I continued, "that the present dramatic formula permits is but a mere trickle; it is not of our tradition," and to rouse Lantern out of a lifetime of prejudices I told him that before he came I was thinking of the joy I had experienced when a boy in the stalls of the Gymnase during a performance of *Monsieur Alphonse*. "You have outgrown such crude æstheticism," he said dryly. "We grow into ourselves, Lantern, if we grow," I answered. "But," said Lantern, "you would not surely return to the whistle, at the sound of which a back cloth is lowered and the side scenes advanced or withdrawn?" "I am afraid I would," I answered, "and shall be able to give you some reason for preferring the English form, which has come down, with some modifications, from Shakespeare to Congreve, and was accepted by Sheridan and Goldsmith; but I would ask you first to admit that a literary form may shrink and wither, and that——" "The dramatic form," said Lantern, "is a hard material (stone or marble it may be compared to) through which the dramatist has to cut his way with hammer and chisel." "But, Lantern, form is not meritorious in itself, it is but a vehicle, and a man is not a greater artist because he writes in the harder form of the ballade rather than in the looser form of the stanza." "The soliloquy," interposed Lantern, "is to some extent defensible, but words should never be spoken on the stage that the bystander is not supposed to hear," and shuddering slightly, he spent the rest of his feelings on his watch chain. "But will you tell, Lantern, why an aside should never be indulged in? Will you

give me a reason? Shakespeare, all the Elizabethan dramatists, Goldsmith, Sheridan, and all the early French dramatists used the aside—why, then, Lantern, why deride it?" "Because the convention that only the audience hears the aside is too crude," he answered. "We have progressed since then." "In what, dear Lantern?" I asked. "Not in the results, surely?" "In the means," he replied, and instead of twitting him, as I might have done, for looking upon the means as more important than the end, I said: "You think we should cling closer to Nature?" Lantern nodded, and I continued: "But we do not get nearer to Nature by imprisoning all our characters into a single set." "You were thinking," he answered, "of the joy that you experienced when a boy at a performance of *Monsieur Alphonse*." "I was, Lantern, and busily comparing the different literary methods of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones in *Saints and Sinners* and Dumas Fils in *Monsieur Alphonse*." "A strange association of styles," said Lantern, and he seemed interested to hear how two plays so different should have come into the same meditation. "*Saints and Sinners*," I said, "was the last play written in the old English formula, several changes of scene in each act and the dialogue falling into soliloquies and asides, according to the nature of the story, without the author stopping to ask himself if the critics would approve, the method in its innocency reminding me of a picture by Francesca in which one of the figures throws a shadow; the other figures in the picture are shadowless." And I waited

for Lantern to admire the point that I had made, but instead of rendering homage to it, he asked me, I thought a little dryly, which play I preferred—*Monsieur Alphonse,* or *Saints and Sinners.* "Both are forgotten," I answered. "Then," he said, "you're talking about means rather than results," to which I made reply that I did not say, nor did I think of saying, that an enlargement of the formula would certainly lead to better results (of the results we can never be sure); my meaning was that the drama has fallen into the straitness that might be compared to certain forms of French verse.

"It was in the nineties that Ibsen appeared in England——" "But Ibsen," said Lantern, "whom you used to admire, wrote his greatest plays without dropping into monologues and asides." "He did, Lantern, he did; we will speak of Ibsen's craft and the fruit it has borne presently. At the present moment I am thinking of you walking at his head, with Post at his heels. By the way, I haven't seen Post for a long time, many years; I hope he is well?" "We haven't seen each other lately," Lantern answered, "but I believe him to be quite well. You were saying that in the nineties Ibsen appeared, with me walking at his head and Post at his heels." "Yes, declaiming like the King of Dahomet Apparitor, who walks on certain occasions in front of the king's bull, crying, 'This is the bull, the one bull, the only bull.' I can see you still in my imagination leading the ringed bull, the little hairy Norwegian bull, crying, 'Here is the bull of drama, the one

bull, the only bull,' and little Post in the rear crying, 'This is the bull, the king of bulls, the bull with the crumpled horn, that tossed the aside and trampled the soliloquy,' contriving exits and entrances from the same drawing-room with a skill unequalled by any French dramatist, and writing a dialogue that makes French dialogue seem very halting." "Did Post ever say that?" Lantern asked. "Somehow I don't recognise him in it. It is much more like your own talk." "No man ever wrote dialogue as skilfully as Ibsen," I answered, "and his dreaming, questioning, spiritual soul was possessed of a particular sense of beauty." "Well, then," cried Lantern, "you have the result; the means produce the result." "Ibsen was a man of genius," I cried, "and like every man of genius he made the form that he acquired in France his own, extracting all that fourteen entrances and exits in each act can give, just as Wagner extracted all the beauty the *leit motif* had for giving. In other hands the *leit motif* is abhorrent, and in the same way the fourteen exits and entrances in each act are abhorrent except in Ibsen. The form has given what it could give. Moreover, the form grew up with Ibsen, and it was his need."

"The romantic formula having ceased to interest him, he turned to the realistic," said Lantern.

"But, my dear Lantern, how can dramatic Art be described as realistic? We begin by supposing a room with three walls; the convention that the fourth wall has been removed is the first con-

dition of the existence of the theatre. And if the scene be in the open air, the painted canvas which does duty for trees wouldn't deceive a child, and the better painted the trees and the rhododendrons are, the uglier they are. To look at even the finest pictures in the National Gallery for more than five minutes is weariness, but on the stage we have to look at the same rhododendrons for two hours and a half. Then we are asked to accept a gaslight shining through a hole in a curtain as a star, and if there be any haymaking in the play the moon will be, of a certainty, as big, or bigger, than the moon that lights George Mason's harvesters home from the fields. Conventions and artifices are part and parcel of the Art of the stage, of all Art, for Art is not Nature, because it is Art; why, then, should you object to soliloquies and asides, preferring in the interests of reality eighty-four entrances and exits in the space of two hours and a half?" "Eighty-four?" interjected Lantern suddenly. "Yes, eighty-four," I replied; "fourteen entrances and exits in the first act are twenty-eight, twice twenty-eight are fifty-six, and twenty-eight added are eighty-four." "But," said Lantern, "the number of exits and entrances depends on the number of characters." "Ibsen," I answered him, "could write a play with five or six characters. To do this was his special gift, but the modern English comedy and the French contain if not eighty-four at least sixty-five or seventy exits and entrances. Have you never, Lantern, hand on your heart, experienced a feeling of exasperation when in the third act

a man says that he will go and smoke a cigar on the terrace? In that horrid moment we feel dramatic Art to be more straitened and artificial than the ballade, the kyrielle, the rondeau, the rondel, the Sicilian octave, or the sestina. In its seventieth exit or entrance the modern comedy attains to the artificiality of the chant royal, and you will admit that this form has never produced a poem." "But the ballade has produced many poems," said Lantern, "and the form is nearly as strict as the chant royal." "The ballade," I answered, "existed long before Villon. In the works of Gower, a poet who wrote in three languages with equal facility and equal mediocrity, will be found fifty examples of the ballade quite as correctly written as Villon, but without his poetry. Gower lived a hundred years before Villon, and during these years the ballade was waxing to the perfect flower that it attained in Villon's ballade to his mother. More it had not for giving, and it died like a flower that has seeded. Even the genius of Banville was not able to breathe life into it, and the history of the ballade is the history of all art formulas.

"To return, Lantern, from poetry to the stage. I would like to ask you if the leanness of the dramatic formula does not awaken hope in you that somebody will be born who will dare to write long speeches in place of love scenes in which the lovers are almost mute. Instead of the love scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, we have the swain and his lady addressing the very curtest remarks to each other:

HE. Have you nothing to say to me?

SHE. No. No.

HE. No hopeful word?

SHE. Do not press me to speak.

HE. To-morrow?

SHE. Perhaps.

HE. You will write?

SHE. Yes, I will write.

(*Exit. The lady returns to the fire, which goes out slowly.*)

(*Curtain.*)

"Such scenes as these, and they are common in London plays, set me wondering what Rachel, Desclée, Frédéric Lemaître and Salvini would think if they were asked to speak such dialogue. I can imagine them gathering up their grave clothes, anxious to return to their tombs, whispering, 'But we are men and women, and can make nothing out of the speech of daws, jays and magpies.' A parrot is loquacious compared with these latter-day dramatists. I remember a comedy at the Haymarket in which the leading characters played dominoes, and my remembrance of the dialogue is:

" 'Double-six.' (*Long silence.*)

" 'I can't play, I must draw one.' (*Long silence.*)

" 'It's your turn.' (*Long silence.*)

"An old woman occupied a corner of the stage, uttering now and again, as a parrot might: 'I don't think that man will come in to-night.' I will not say, Lantern, for I wish to be quite fair with you, that in this play we have one after your own heart, but I do say that we have in it the ultimate fruit of the realistic formula, no soliloquies, no asides, no long speeches."

"A good deal can be proved by choosing examples from unknown plays," Lantern answered, and I knew he was vexed from the way he played with his watch chain. "You would have been more convincing if you had chosen your examples from our best writers." "From Galsworthy?" I asked, and called to his memory a love scene in *Justice* or *Strife*, I have forgotten which, in which the quest of realism is carried to a triumphant end, for so strangled are the characters by their emotions that they become far less articulate than parrots. "But does not passion render us speechless?" Lantern asked. "I think it does, Lantern, in real life, but we cannot carry real life into Art." "Why not?" said Lantern. "Because Art, Lantern, is Art, and life is life. In the legend of *The Ring*, the beauty of Brunnhilde rendered Siegfried speechless, but Wagner did not follow the legend, he wrote the exultant duet, leaving Reyer, an inferior writer, to allow the lovers to stand mutely gazing at each other, like Mr. Galsworthy's lovers." "It all depends," said Lantern, "which you prefer, the realistic method or the romantic." "But I do not prefer either, for I do not distinguish between the two, Lantern. Wagner was

romantic to the finger-tips, he was a realist from the crown of his head to his heels, and the difference between him and Reyer was that one man was a genius and the other—well, a man of talent, if you like." "And you think then," said Lantern, "that if you were to devote yourself to the stage your quest of realism, perhaps I should say truth, would have led you to changes of scene, in which two footmen carry two chairs and a small table on to the stage, whereat the actors continue their discourses." "My dear Lantern, the illusion created by externals, scenes, costumes, lighting and short sentences is in itself illusory. The best performances of plays and operas are witnessed at rehearsals. Jean de Reszke was never so like Tristan at night as he was in the afternoon when he sang the part in a short jacket, a bowler hat and an umbrella in his hand. The chain armour and the plumes that he wore at night were but a distraction, setting our thoughts on periods, on the short swords in use in the ninth century in Ireland or in Cornwall, on the comfort or the discomfort of the ships in which the lovers were voyaging, on the absurd nightdress which is the convention that Isolde should appear in, a garment she never wore and which we know to be make-believe. But the hat and feathers that Isolde appears in when she rehearses the part are forgotten the moment she sings; and if I had to choose to see Forbes Robertson play *Hamlet* or rehearse *Hamlet*, I should not hesitate for a moment. The moment he speaks he ceases to be a modern man, but in black hose the illusion ceases, for we forget

the Prince of Denmark and remember the mummer. When in a stall in Covent Garden a woman sitting beside me said (when Chaliapin appeared), 'I have been waiting all the evening for Chaliapin,' I answered, 'And I have been waiting all the evening for *Ivan the Terrible*.'

"The last time I saw *The School for Scandal* was at the Court Theatre, and to avoid the small table and the two footmen the management devised a triangular room, not much larger than a prison cell, into which all the people of the play collected as best they could, looking very ill at ease, for there was not a chair nor a table. The one stool made matters worse, for it distracted our attention from the play.

"In answer to my question why the play was not produced as it was written, Mr. Fagan told me that the public would not stand two footmen bringing in a table and two chairs." "My dear Moore," Lantern interrupted, "you would not have thought of all these things so thoroughly if you were not writing a play yourself. Of that I am sure. Come, what is the name of it?" "*The Coming of Gabrielle*," I answered. "A comedy?" he asked—"one in which, I hope, two footmen carry on a small table with two chairs to match, at which the actors continue the plot." "No, Lantern," I answered sadly, "one must write in the idiom of one's own time, however indifferent the idiom is. My comedy is no innovation, and I do not intend to write another, for my thirst for the stage has been slaked in having written just once a comedy that pleased myself."

THE COMING OF GABRIELLE

Note.—This Comedy does not seem to me suited exactly to the present time; it would be better to throw it back a few years into the 'sixties or the 'eighties—in other words, into the crinoline or bustle period. Gabrielle speaks of her age, saying she is twenty-seven. If the period chosen be '62, Gabrielle would be born in 1835; if the period chosen be '82, Gabrielle would be born in 1855.

PEOPLE IN THE PLAY

MEN

Lewis Davenant, a man of letters living in a provincial town.
Sebastian Dayne, his cousin and secretary.
Jim Godby, a sailor, second mate of the *Hannah Maria.*
Mr. Meyer, a translator of Mr. Davenant's works.
Lord Carra, a sportsman.

WOMEN

Lady Letham, an admirer of Mr. Davenant's works.
Martin, a parlour-maid.
Gabrielle, the Countess von Hoenstadt.

Act I. takes place in Mr. Davenant's Drawing-Room in Rockminster, Act II. in the Library at Claremont Villa, and Act III. in the same place as Act I.

ACT I

LEWIS DAVENANT'S *drawing-room.* SEBASTIAN *is discovered when the curtain rises. He rings. Enter* MARTIN.

SEBASTIAN. Are there many people in the parlour?

MARTIN. I think there are still five, sir.

SEBASTIAN. And the sailor, is he still there?

MARTIN. Yes, sir; he refuses to leave.

SEBASTIAN. I suppose there's nothing for it but to see him.

(*A moment after* MARTIN *announces* MR. GODBY.)

GODBY. One has to wait for the tide, but one gets into port at last. (*On catching sight of* SEBASTIAN.) Ah! I suppose you've been waiting for the tide, too?

SEBASTIAN. I am always in port, and often wishing the tide would take me out of port. You see, Mr. Godby, I'm Mr. Davenant's secretary.

GODBY. I'm glad to hear it, for you'll be able to tell me if Mr. Davenant is coming down.

SEBASTIAN. He may come down.

GODBY. What do you mean by "he may come down"? To-day is 'is at 'ome day, ain't it?

SEBASTIAN. I didn't say that Mr. Davenant wouldn't come down.

GODBY. But he must come down to receive 'is visitors.

SEBASTIAN. He begged of me, in his unavoidable absence——

GODBY. Unavoidable?

SEBASTIAN. You know, Mr. Godby—or perhaps you do not know—that Mr. Davenant is exceedingly busy just now. He feels that he must make some alterations in the play that is going to be performed at Vienna, and as soon as you have left, and all the other gentlemen and ladies in the parlour, he will ask me to copy the new text; and whilst his valet is packing up his trunks he will be walking up and down the room, back and forth, meditating further changes. . . . I beg you to believe, Mr. Godby, that we have not a moment to lose.

GODBY. I don't understand much of all you're saying. I only know I've been told that he's always at 'ome Tuesdays.

SEBASTIAN. Martin was wrong to say as much. Mr. Davenant does receive visitors on Tuesdays sometimes—I may go so far as to say generally—but to-day he is very busy. I've spoken to you of the alterations he is making in his play, and, of course, there is his luggage, which, although in the hands of a capable valet, requires Mr. Davenant's personal supervision. But as I am his secretary, I may ask if you have come on literary business, to speak to him about one of his books, or about *Elizabeth Cooper*, the play. You've heard about it, no doubt.

GODBY. Heard about it! My wife never talks of nothing else but Elizabeth Cooper.

SEBASTIAN. Ah! then it is about *Elizabeth Cooper* that you wish to see Mr. Davenant?

GODBY. I must see him. I have come up from Southampton.

SEBASTIAN. I'm really very sorry, Mr. Godby. Your wife is only one among thousands who would like to speak to Mr. Davenant about his famous novel, and in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Davenant I beg that you will tell me——

GODBY. Tell you my business, young man! Now, is it likely? —or didn't you 'ear me say that I'd come up from Southampton?

SEBASTIAN. That's nothing of a journey, Mr. Godby—a mere matter of a couple of hundred miles. People come much farther than that to see Mr. Davenant.

GODBY. Do they, now?—and go away without seeing him, maybe? But I'm not one of them crew, and when I tell you that I was spliced three weeks come Tuesday, and 'ave come up here on the wife's business, you may bet the last shot in your locker that I am pretty keen to see Mr. Davenant, and mean to speak to him as man to man.

SEBASTIAN. To speak to Mr. Davenant as man to man!

GODBY. Them's my sailing orders, and it needs no spy-glass to see that you ain't got a wife, Mr. Secretary, else you'd know without my telling that none but a fool would go out on his wife's

very particular business and return home with nothing more interestin' to tell her than that he had seen Secretary.

SEBASTIAN. Mr. Davenant is engaged in making certain alterations in his play——

GODBY. I've heard enough of those alterations.

SEBASTIAN. His valet is packing his luggage——

GODBY. I've heard about the luggage——

SEBASTIAN. Our time will be completely occupied till the carriage comes to take him to the station. I do hope you will understand how impossible it is for Mr. Davenant to see you; and as there are three other people waiting to see me in the parlour, you will excuse me, Mr. Godby.

GODBY. I shall wait.

(*He goes out.* SEBASTIAN *rings. Enter* MARTIN.)

SEBASTIAN. How many did you say were in the waiting-room?

MARTIN. Two gentlemen and a lady, sir.

SEBASTIAN. Show the lady up.

(*A few moments after* MARTIN *announces* LADY LETHAM, *a young and pretty woman about thirty, of almost ecstatic gaze and gait.*)

LADY LETHAM. So this is his room—the room in which he writes! Letters, books—his books, and the books he reads! Pictures, manuscripts in the cupboards, no doubt. Oh! I beg your

pardon, I did not know anybody was here. You're waiting for Mr. Davenant?

SEBASTIAN. I am his secretary. Won't you sit down? I am at your service.

LADY LETHAM. Mr. Davenant will come down presently?

SEBASTIAN. Mr. Davenant leaves for Vienna this evening to attend the rehearsals of his play *Elizabeth Cooper*, which is to be produced, as I daresay you have heard, at Vienna.

LADY LETHAM. So *Elizabeth Cooper* is going to be played at last?

SEBASTIAN. Yes; and the performance will be a great literary event. Mr. Davenant's Continental reputation is growing day by day. You've read the novel?

LADY LETHAM. The book is always by my bedside. But I have not heard of the play. You see, I've just come up from my country home far away in Westmorland, where we live, my husband and I, in a peaceful, almost pastoral, retreat within view of beautiful mountain ranges. I should like Mr. Davenant to see our landscape, for I'm sure it would inspire him. I have described it in my letters, and as you are his secretary you have perhaps heard my name—Lady Letham.

SEBASTIAN. Mr. Davenant will be so sorry to miss seeing you.

LADY LETHAM. Could he not spare a few minutes?

SEBASTIAN. He would like to, but if he did he'd certainly miss his train.

LADY LETHAM. He must not do that. I am staying, not many miles from here, with my sister, Lady Ewhurst, at Charming Dean, and shall hope to see Mr. Davenant when he returns.

SEBASTIAN. You spoke of some letters you wrote to Mr. Davenant. If you'll allow me, I will look out your name. (*He goes to the writing-table and turns over the papers.*) You wrote to him on the 22nd of last month, and again on the 25th. The third letter—I am sure there was a third, but I cannot lay hand upon it.

LADY LETHAM. I thought I put "personal" on the envelopes.

SEBASTIAN. That is just why I read your letters. I read all Mr. Davenant's personal correspondence.

LADY LETHAM. Oh! How is one, then, to correspond directly with Mr. Davenant?

SEBASTIAN. You must write to him on postcards.

LADY LETHAM. But on a postcard it is impossible to explain——

SEBASTIAN. But on several——

LADY LETHAM. It seems to me, sir, that you're laughing at me.

SEBASTIAN. I hope, Lady Letham, that you do not think me guilty of such impoliteness?

LADY LETHAM. No, not exactly laughing at me; I exaggerated. Quizzing, perhaps?

SEBASTIAN. I beg of you, Lady Letham, to believe that no

such thought entered my mind. It is about *Elizabeth Cooper* that you wish to speak to Mr. Davenant?

LADY LETHAM. Yes; but since you assure me he is busy——

SEBASTIAN. Lady Letham, I assure you.

LADY LETHAM. I will promise not to detain him for more than a few minutes. Say that I will not detain him for more than five.

SEBASTIAN. I should be delighted to oblige you, Lady Letham, but I beg you to believe that I dare not approach him just now. He is in the room above us, walking to and forth, chewing his words. Believe me, it will be very much better——

LADY LETHAM. For me to write another letter? But will you promise me to see that he receives it and that he reads it?

SEBASTIAN. On the word of honour of his cousin, Sebastian Dayne.

LADY LETHAM. Thank you, Mr. Dayne. On thinking it over, it seems to me that I might do worse than to confide to you my little project. Mr. Davenant has not written a long work for some years. He publishes a volume of delightful stories now and then, and some critical articles from a new and original point of view, altogether delightful——

SEBASTIAN. Profound.

LADY LETHAM. True. But are you not of my opinion that it is regrettable that he does not apply himself to a long work? Perhaps he is doing so; you are his secretary, and can tell me.

We, his admirers, are waiting for a long, long work from Mr. Davenant.

SEBASTIAN. May I ask, if you have a suggestion to make, if you have in mind a theme that you would like Mr. Davenant to treat?

LADY LETHAM. I am afraid, Mr. Dayne, that you still continue in your quizzical humour, and that you are under the impression that you are talking with some innocent little blue-stocking come up from her country residence in Westmorland. If that be so, I assure you you are mistaken. I am no blue-stocking; I do not care for the colour. My stockings are rose. (*She lifts her skirt and exhibits some pretty ankles and legs.*) Blue stockings and floss silk will never collaborate with Mr. Davenant. No, I'm not a blue-stocking. I think I've already told you that I live amid woods within view of a range of mountains, and my idea is this: that these natural landscapes of mine and my husband's might inspire a great work. You understand what I mean, Mr. Dayne?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, I think I understand. But, you see, Mr. Davenant never writes; he dictates.

LADY LETHAM. Then he must bring you with him. (*Turning from* SEBASTIAN *and looking round the room.*) But what a delightful life you live with him in this room, and in the intimate recesses of his soul, following every turn of his thought!

SEBASTIAN. Mr. Davenant's thoughts are very dear to me;

but in this world nobody, it would seem, is ever satisfied with his lot. I should like to have some time for my own thoughts—a wish so ridiculous for a secretary to entertain, I admit—and I regret sometimes that I did not follow my father's advice and study for a fellowship. My father is a professor of the University. He wished me to study for a fellowship, but I had seen so many men wear their brains away in pursuit of a fellowship—running second for it, later turning up third, fourth, fifth, and then giving up the hopeless struggle—that I said to my father: "Fellowships are much more difficult to get to-day than they were in your time; I must think of something else." He was angry—fathers always are angry with their sons—and my mother asked Lewis Davenant, who is my cousin, if he would give me this job.

LADY LETHAM. If you wish for time for your thoughts to mature in, you must have thoughts worth writing down. Are you a poet or a novelist?

SEBASTIAN. A poet—a volume of verses——

LADY LETHAM. I'm sure they're charming; they couldn't be else. You'll come with your cousin and spend a few weeks or a few months in my Westmorland castle?—the longer the better. Literature will occupy him in the mornings, and in the afternoons we shall go for drives; and the evenings will be passed in conversation. You will read me your verses, Mr. Dayne?

SEBASTIAN. Is your husband, Lord Letham, also devoted to literature?

LADY LETHAM. To some extent. Till I married him he had hardly read a book.

SEBASTIAN. But you have been married some time?

LADY LETHAM. For so long that it seems that I never was anything else but married. My husband and I are excellent friends. Now, Mr. Dayne, that I have confided to you my secret, you will pass it on to Mr. Davenant, and will use all your persuasions to get him to accept my invitation? It will give me much pleasure to have you both with me in Westmorland. Good-bye.

(SEBASTIAN *rings.* *Enter* MARTIN.)

SEBASTIAN (*to* MARTIN). There are still two gentlemen in the waiting-room. Will you show one of them up?

(*Exit* MARTIN *and* LADY LETHAM. *A moment after she announces* MR. MEYER.)

SEBASTIAN. I may as well tell you at once, Mr. Meyer, that Mr. Davenant is very busy making some alterations in his play. His luggage is being packed, and he starts for Vienna this evening. Be seated, I beg of you. I am his secretary, and if you have come to speak to him on any matter concerning literature I shall be glad to hear you.

MEYER. You have no doubt seen, and perhaps examined with some care, Mr. Krämer's translations?

SEBASTIAN. I have heard Mr. Krämer's translations criticised adversely.

MEYER. I do not believe that any writer has suffered more from mistranslations than Mr. Davenant. (*He takes some papers from his pocket.*) I will ask you to find a copy of *Elizabeth Cooper* and to follow me whilst I read. You know German?

SEBASTIAN. Not a word, unfortunately.

MEYER. I'm sory, for without some knowledge of German it will be difficult for me to make plain the faults that my friend, Mr. Krämer, has committed. All the same, if you follow me carefully I hope to be able to make you understand that my friend's text is a mess, and nothing else. No other words can express it—a mess, Mr. Sebastian Dayne.

SEBASTIAN. But Mr. Davenant starts to-night for Vienna.

MEYER. That is why I have come here so that he may know how he has been defamed, and the German language, too, has been defamed, by my friend Mr. Krämer. I cannot find words to express the mess that he has made of Mr. Davenant's books. It is sad to speak like this of a friend; and if it were not that my admiration is without limit for Mr. Davenant, I should not speak. But after much consideration I decided that it would not be honourable for me to conceal the truth from Mr. Davenant any longer.

SEBASTIAN. As Mr. Davenant does not read translations, he does not suffer much.

MEYER. But Mr. Davenant is going to Vienna, and will hear Mr. Krämer's mistakes on the stage.

SEBASTIAN. Quite true; I hadn't thought of that. But he leaves to-night, and that is why he is so very busy, and why I am obliged to tell you, Mr. Meyer, that it would be impossible for me to examine the analysis you have made of your friend's translations. If you will leave your manuscript, I will submit it to our German professor at the University, and Mr. Davenant will go into the matter when he returns from Vienna. (*He rings.*) Mr. Meyer, I shall be so much obliged if you will excuse me.

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN. There is still one gentleman.

SEBASTIAN. Show him up.

(MR. MEYER *goes out with* MARTIN.)

SEBASTIAN. I see he hasn't left his manuscript. So much the better! The house overflows.

(*A moment after* MARTIN *announces* LORD CARRA, *a young man elegantly dressed—a sportsman, one would judge by his appearance.*)

LORD CARRA. How do you do, Mr. Davenant?

SEBASTIAN. I am not Mr. Davenant, unfortunately. I do not know why I say unfortunately, for very likely it would be stupid to exchange youthful years for literary glory.

LORD CARRA. It would, indeed. Who would do it?

SEBASTIAN. Who indeed? Yet the object of your visit to Mr. Davenant is literature?

LORD CARRA. Not to talk to him about his literature. I shouldn't know how to begin, for I haven't read one of his books.

SEBASTIAN. Not one?

LORD CARRA. It is my mother, Lady Carra, who reads his books.

SEBASTIAN. Then you have come, Lord Carra, to express to Mr. Davenant the admiration that Mr. Davenant's works have inspired in your mother?

LORD CARRA. Not exactly. I have come to ask him to do me a favour, and as you seem to know Mr. Davenant very well——

SEBASTIAN. I am his secretary.

LORD CARRA. Then I can explain my errand to you. In one of Mr. Davenant's books there is a man called Rudolph, and my mother never ceases to remind me that Rudolph and I are like each other, and that many things that have happened to Rudolph in the story have happened to me.

SEBASTIAN. Rudolph appears in several volumes. Can you tell me in which these unfortunate coincidences occur?

LORD CARRA. I'm afraid I can't. You see, I didn't ask my mother, who would have thought she was frightening me. But it isn't pleasant, all the same, to be told that one is following in the footsteps of Rudolph, who, mother says, is making for an untimely end. Now what is going to be the end of Rudolph?

SEBASTIAN. It appears that Rudolph's suicide depends on his meeting with a certain woman with pale eyes and red hair.

LORD CARRA. Couldn't something be done to prevent his meeting her?

SEBASTIAN. Perhaps. I cannot promise, but will use my influence with Mr. Davenant. He may be able to devise a different end. He once spoke of bankruptcy. But you wouldn't like that? Could you suggest an end for Rudolph?

LORD CARRA. I should like him to win the Derby.

SEBASTIAN. So should I. We all like a man who wins the Derby.

LORD CARRA. Thank you. You understand my position? It appears that anything Rudolph does influences me to do likewise.

SEBASTIAN. So you have come to the reasonable conclusion that it would be well for you to influence Rudolph?

LORD CARRA. I am much obliged to you for your kindly offer of help, Mr. Dayne.

(SEBASTIAN *rings. Enter* MARTIN.)

LORD CARRA. Good-bye!

(*Exeunt* LORD CARRA *and* MARTIN.)

SEBASTIAN. The "at home" day is ended, and my cousin can come downstairs.

(*He rings a different bell.* DAVENANT *enters, a man of about fifty-two, of good figure, well dressed and well preserved.*)

DAVENANT. It's all settled, my dear Sebastian. I'm not going to Vienna.

SEBASTIAN. Not going to Vienna!—and everything is ready; all the alterations made in the text and the trunks packed! Not going to Vienna! The Austrian capital turned inside out; all the literary aristocracy invited; the chickens killed! I shall have to write twenty letters, and the first night will be a fizzle without you.

DAVENANT. But people do not go to the theatre to see the author.

SEBASTIAN. My dear Lewis, you should not let your humours get the better of you.

DAVENANT. I know, I know; and have been struggling with myself since early morning. At ten o'clock I decided to go, but at half-past ten my resolution began to melt.

SEBASTIAN. But why won't you go? Tell me. Your trunk is packed; I'll take you to the station; a short sea passage, a few hours in the Orient express, and the train will draw up alongside of the platform and you will be met by a crowd of poets, painters, and politicians.

DAVENANT. My dear Sebastian, though the crowd were all lawny bishops, I couldn't face it. And the subsequent proceedings! You spoke of chickens. Chickens mean a banquet, a banquet means speeches, and speeches of how Art reconciles nations. How the fact of having German taught in the schools will make England love Germany better, and that the Germans by learning

English in their schools will be able to arrive at a better understanding of a nation which, after all, is the same nation, for there is a great deal of Anglo-Saxon blood still in England; and after half an hour of this nonsense I shall have to rise and talk about Shakespeare, saying that I have not come hither to speak in my own name, but in the name of English literature, of which I am an unworthy representative. And then I or another will have to explain the relations of Art to Nature, that Nature is something more and something less than Art; that Art is not Nature, because it is Art; and that Nature is not Art, because it is Nature; and the stupendous creations of the artist are no less mysterious than those of God himself.

SEBASTIAN. Charming, delightful; very like yourself in your best vein; but what about the disappointment on the platform? —for I shall not be able to write to them all. Can't I persuade you? You want a change from this provinicial town in which you have chosen to bury yourself. The poets and *literati* who rise up in your imagination to frighten you will amuse you when you meet them in a café at midnight, and the fuss won't be as disagreeable as you think for. The Viennese ladies will remind you of the old days in Paris, and if I know you at all, Lewis, you will come back to us talking endlessly of this journey to Vienna; it will become one of your most precious memories. You always say nobody has cultivated memory as you have. Go to Vienna.

DAVENANT. But you see, Sebastian, our ages are different.

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN. Will you see Mr. Godby now, sir?

DAVENANT. Mr. Godby!

MARTIN. The gentleman that has been waiting to see you for the last two hours.

SEBASTIAN. A sailor.

DAVENANT. The first admirer that the sea has brought me, so far as I know; so whilst you're copying in the corrections, Sebastian——

SEBASTIAN. Then you are going to Vienna?

DAVENANT (*testily*). I didn't say I was going to Vienna. You always want to bring things to a head. (*To* MARTIN.) Mr. Godby wishes to see me, and as I've nothing to do I think I'll interview this ancient mariner.

MARTIN. He isn't an old man, sir.

DAVENANT. Old or young, show him up; he is a mariner, if nothing else.

(*Exit and re-enter* MARTIN *and* MR. GODBY.)

MARTIN. Mr. Godby, sir.

DAVENANT. I'm sorry you've been kept waiting.

GODBY. It doesn't matter, since I haven't had to go without seeing you.

DAVENANT. But I'm told you've been kept waiting all the afternoon.

GODBY (*handing* DAVENANT *a book*). Secretary sent me this 'ere book to read.

DAVENANT (*taking the book*). *The Koran!* (*To* SEBASTIAN.) I think you might have found a more interesting book for Mr. Godby.

SEBASTIAN. Shall I go and copy the alterations?

DAVENANT. If you like.

(*Exit* SEBASTIAN.)

GODBY. I asked Secretary for the paper, but he said that you didn't receive newspapers, and that your visitors were always given this 'ere book. (*Handing* DAVENANT *a box of Turkish Delight.*) A little present from Priscilla. She wouldn't leave go of me till I promised to give it to you.

DAVENANT. A box of Turkish Delight?

GODBY. From Priscilla, my wife three weeks come Tuesday. So no more letters and poems, that is what I have come to tell you. If Priscilla had known what you be like, you would have had them all back.

DAVENANT. What I am like?

GODBY. Her notion of the author of—of *Elizabeth Cooper* was a young fellow all scarves and riding breeches. Bless your 'eart! I saw through you when she read out the number of books you had written. I says to 'er, "Priscilla, it ain't possible; he be a man of past fifty"—that's ten years older than myself; and when I tell you that she thinks me an old 'un, you can judge for

yourself what she'd think of you. Now let's get a good look at ye. The very spit of what I told Priscilla you were! A man about fifty or fifty-two; the hair grown very thin on the top; grey about the ears and in the whiskers; getting a bit bluff in the bows and broad in the beam.

DAVENANT. My secretary mentioned that you're a sailor, Mr. Godby.

GODBY. Second mate aboard the brigantine the *Hannah Maria,* at your service. Now come, Mr. Davenant, don't you think a man like yourself might employ his time better than by sending letters and poems to a girl like Priscilla?

DAVENANT. I know nothing of what you're talking—absolutely nothing!

GODBY. Well, if you don't know 'er as Priscilla Godby, maybe you know her as Priscilla Jones?

DAVENANT. I don't remember ever having heard either of those names before.

GODBY. You won't deny your own handwriting and your signature at the end of the letters?

(*He fumbles in his pocket and hands some letters to* MR. DAVENANT.)

DAVENANT (*after looking at letters*). This is not my signature, as I shall be able to prove to you in a moment. (*He goes to writing-table, takes up pen, and writes on a piece of paper.*) Will you compare my signature, which you have seen me write,

with the signature at the end of those letters. (*Pause.*) Are they the same?

GODBY. A man doesn't always sign the same.

DAVENANT. Is there any resemblance whatsoever?

GODBY. I can't say there is. A mystery this is, surely!

DAVENANT. Not such a mystery. You mentioned that Mrs. Godby had read some of my books?

GODBY. Ah! now we're beginning to understand each other. Yes, she has read all your books and written you many letters. They cannot all have gone astray.

DAVENANT. Mr. Dayne answers my letters to correspondents who are not known to me personally.

GODBY. Well, this is a pretty how-de-do! So all them letters aren't yours, but Secretary's?

DAVENANT. That is the only explanation I can think of. But allow me. (*He rings.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. Martin, will you tell Mr. Dayne I should like to speak to him?

(*Exit* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. Priscilla Godby; no, I don't remember anyone of that name. Mr. Dayne often mentioned the names of my correspondents, and I am sure I never heard him speak of that name. But what is the matter, Mr. Godby?

GODBY. I'm thinking how Priscilla is going to take this 'ere

news. What a squall! She will be took aback, and all standing. It was all right to do a bit of teasing about yer age, telling her you was an old 'un, hair thin on the top and grey about the whiskers, but I can't bring myself to tell her that all them letters which she has been a-treasuring up was not written by you, but by Secretary.

DAVENANT. But why tell her?

GODBY. Supposin' one of these days you was to run across each other?

DAVENANT. In a world composed mainly of unreasonable accidents such a thing might happen.

GODBY. It might indeed.

DAVENANT. But, Mr. Godby, I must plead his youth, and that the correspondence was harmless and gave her a great deal of pleasure.

GODBY. It did that.

DAVENANT. So perhaps it would be better for you to tell her that I am not only the ugly old fellow whom you so admirably summarised in three or four telling touches, but an old curmudgeon who received you very uncivilly and told you his house was overflowing with letters from all sorts and kinds of women, and that to get rid of a packet now and then was—— How would you word it, Mr. Godby?

GODBY. Like getting the pumps to work.

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN.)

DAVENANT. Mr. Godby has come for his wife's letters.

SEBASTIAN. Mrs. Godby!

DAVENANT. Priscilla Jones that was.

SEBASTIAN. Priscilla Jones! Priscilla Jones!

DAVENANT. It would be just as well to avoid prevarication, Sebastian, and to come to the point; for it appears of a certainty that you have been carrying on a correspondence with Miss Priscilla Jones, sending her poems—which you had, of course, a perfect right to do in your own name, but not in mine. Really, Sebastian, this last pleasantry of yours surprises me, and in the presence of Mr. Godby I beg to protest!

SEBASTIAN. But I told you, Lewis, that Priscilla Jones had written about *Elizabeth Cooper*.

DAVENANT. Very likely, and it may be that I authorised you to write and thank her for her letter. But I did not tell you to continue the correspondence.

GODBY. He sent her poems, Mr. Davenant.

SEBASTIAN. She was not your wife when I sent her poems; and if she had been, it seems to me that a poem may be sent to the married and to the single, to the young and to the old—to everybody, except, of course, to people on their honeymoon. How long have you been married?

GODBY. Three weeks come Tuesday.

SEBASTIAN. Your wife hasn't received a poem from me within

the last three weeks. Really, I fail to see the cause of your complaint.

DAVENANT. I too fail to see it, Mr. Godby, and I think you will too if you will consider it. Mr. Dayne did not know that Priscilla Jones was about to become Priscilla Godby, nor did he send her in his own name, but in mine. I am the aggrieved person if the poems were bad ones.

GODBY. I would say they were bad, though they were only Secretary's.

DAVENANT. Well, then, Mr. Godby, may we agree to let bygones be bygones?

GODBY. We may, Mr. Davenant, and with all my 'eart. All the same, Priscilla would like to have her letters back; and 'tis but reasonable now she's married.

DAVENANT. Nothing more reasonable in this world. Sebastian, we call upon you to produce Mrs. Godby's letters.

SEBASTIAN. I wish Mr. Godby had written to me about this matter before, for it will be difficult for me to produce these letters at once. You see, Mr. Godby, I have been collecting for some time past the letters that Mr. Davenant receives from the admirers of his books. We have several letters from the lady you had the pleasure of meeting in the parlour to-day, Lady Letham. She is one of our latest correspondents, but there have been many before her. We have received five-and-twenty letters from Lady Dartry; several from Lady Onger; Lady Cong is

represented by five letters. We have letters from many ladies of high position among the French aristocracy. Madame de Belbœuf writes to us frequently, Madame de Cœtlogon occasionally. If I remember right, La Marquise d'Osmond is represented by at least fifty-one letters. (*Going over to a casket.*) In this casket, Mr. Godby, are letters that would paint my cousin's name for ever memorable even if he had not written any books. (*Opening the casket and taking out three or four letters.*) And these forty-three letters were written by the delicious Gabrielle von Hoenstadt.

GODBY. You pay out your jaw-tackle all right, young fellow, and them fine names come mighty easy off your tongue, but I do not happen to hear the name of Priscilla Jones amongst them. Now if you would be just good enough to see if you could find Mrs. Godby's letters at the bottom of that 'ere casket——

SEBASTIAN. Priscilla's letters in this casket, Mr. Godby! This casket is reserved exclusively to ladies of title. Even baronets' wives do not enter here.

DAVENANT. My dear Sebastian, I protest, and warmly, against this fooling! Mr. Godby has come here on a serious errand. I beg you to put that casket away and attend to his request, which is a reasonable one, that you return his wife's letters.

SEBASTIAN. I mentioned a few names, my dear Lewis, for I wished to bring home to Mr. Godby the great volume of correspondence I have to attend to. My time——

DAVENANT. Put down that casket. Your wife's letters, Mr. Godby, shall be returned to her. It is quite undecided whether I go to Vienna or not; and as there are many matters about which I have to speak to my cousin——

GODBY. The alterations you're to make in the play?

DAVENANT. Yes, yes; and in my luggage. Your letters shall be returned to your wife as soon as I return from Vienna; and if I do not go to Vienna, they shall be returned at once within the next few days. And please to understand, Mr. Godby, that I'm grateful to you for your visit; it has made known to me certain things of which I was without any knowledge. I shall have to put my house in order, Mr. Godby. (*He rings bell.*)

GODBY. Thank'ee, thank'ee, sir.

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

GODBY. I have the honour to bid ye good-afternoon, Mr. Davenant, and thank'ee. If you ever wants anything in the farin' line, such as a parrot or what not—at your service!

(DAVENANT *accompanies* GODBY *to the door.* SEBASTIAN *crosses the stage in meditation.*)

DAVENANT. Once more, Sebastian, put those letters back into the casket, and try to remember for the future that you're no longer a baby boy. Thirty is a man's age, and men do not indulge in practical joking. (*The men stand and gaze, and then begin to laugh.*) I was obliged to speak a little severely when Mr. Godby was here, but I'm not such an old fogey, Sebastian, as

not to understand the humour of this correspondence. You didn't say, by the way, that they were my poems, did you?

SEBASTIAN. No, Lewis. The letters were, I assure you, more circumspect than Godby would have led you to think. The poems were sent out of curiosity, for I wished to know how they would strike the ordinary reader.

DAVENANT. Your poems?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, my poems, but——

DAVENANT. But the letters were signed Lewis Davenant. I suppose time must hang a little heavy on your hands in this provincial town, and I'll overlook the escapade, but don't begin another one. I trusted you with my correspondence, and—— I'll say no more.

SEBASTIAN. I am truly repentant, sir. It shall not occur again.

DAVENANT. Among the many names you mentioned just now when you were making fun of that poor simple man Godby was a name that caught my ear—Gabrielle von Hoenstadt. You've spoken to me of her before. She has written, it appears, some very pleasant and witty letters, and it is to her influence that I owe the production of *Elizabeth Cooper* at Vienna!

SEBASTIAN. It is indeed to her that you owe it, for ever since she has read the novel she seems to have thought of little else. It is a pity you didn't read her letters. I pressed you to glance through them—a mere glance would have been enough. Listen

to this. (*Reading.*) "I am tired of the rain, and of myself, and of everything except you. I have never heard your voice. I won't see or hear you, for it would be a catastrophe to fall in love with the man in you. I will only be in love with the author." It is extraordinary, Lewis, that you do not recognise her as—one of your own women speaking to you across the seas.

DAVENANT. One of the women of my imagination. Repeat the lines, Sebastian. (SEBASTIAN *repeats them.*) A whismy, but whether one of the blood or brain, or both, I cannot say.

SEBASTIAN. May I read a little more?

DAVENANT. I'll look into *her* letters myself later. So you recognise her as one of the Davenant kin?

SEBASTIAN. As one who might easily fall in love with you.

DAVENANT. She might have in the years gone by.

SEBASTIAN (*turning over the letters*). She writes forty-three, asking you to come to Vienna. Yet you won't go.

DAVENANT. I'm afraid, Sebastian, that your correspondence with Priscilla Jones has turned your head a little, and that your idea for the moment is that the business of every man is to rush across Europe in pursuit of a woman.

SEBASTIAN. Do you never wish, Lewis, to risk everything—to take a header over the cliff's edge?

DAVENANT. A header after a Naiad whom I have never seen, and of whom I only know through a few extracts from letters.

(SEBASTIAN *presses the letters on* DAVENANT.) Later, I'll look into them.

SEBASTIAN (*returning to the correspondence*). She sends you the name of the hotel where you are to meet her. You are not to go to the Grand Hotel, Hotel Bristol, Krantz, Imperial, or Sacher, for she "would not caramboler with her brothers and friends *en sortant de chez vous.*" How amusing she is! (*Reading.*) "You will stay in the Meissal and Schadn to please me." A mere detail this, but characteristic. You are to send her a note by the hotel messenger, and he will bring back an answer saying she will be with you at a certain hour. And the next day she's going to introduce you to her cousin, with whom you are going to lunch. Could anything be more charming?—and yet you hesitate.

DAVENANT. It is true that I might like her as a friend; but is it worth my while to go to Vienna for a friendship?

SEBASTIAN. But there is an alternative: you might both love each other.

DAVENANT. In that case the disaster would be greater; for what should I do with her at the end of a week? Ask her to come to Paris?

SEBASTIAN. That is exactly how I imagine the adventure.

DAVENANT. Ah! or bring her hither to settle down.

SEBASTIAN. She wouldn't like Rockminster.

DAVENANT. I should have to bid her good-bye at the end

of a week, saying, "Dear Gabrielle, we have passed a charming week together. May I have the pleasure of looking forward to see you when I return to Vienna?"

SEBASTIAN. If these women knew what a man of letters really is, they would seek their lovers among soldiers, sailors, diplomats, merchants, even doctors—anywhere rather than among men of letters.

DAVENANT. It may be that I might still find some favour in her eyes, but——

SEBASTIAN. In your striped trousers and morning coat I assure you——

DAVENANT. The wise man knows that it would be stupid to attempt to continue his youth; even if he could do so by the aid of striped trousers and morning coats, he would be robbing life of its variety, for by a little act of renunciation he creates a new life quite different from the old.

SEBASTIAN. I have often heard you say a man's love is attracted in the beginning by the eye, and that his pride in her poetry, her music, and her pictures comes afterwards; that these are condiments which he sucks at his leisure. Whereas a woman's love—I am still quoting you—arises out of her imagination, enabling her to perform miracles, to straighten the hunchback and to raise the dwarf from 4 ft. 6 in. to 6 ft. 2 in., and to answer an impertinent friend who reminds her that her lover has to stand up at table that she did not notice his height before, but now

that her attention has been called to it she can see that he is somewhat short.

DAVENANT. And in pursuance of your theories——

SEBASTIAN. Your theory——

DAVENANT. You think that Gabrielle will re-create me out of her imagination, and that I shall appear to her as a dancing faun?

SEBASTIAN. I don't know about the faun, but as a soul of fire certainly. The fact that your play is going to be performed, and that you go to Vienna to speak in the name of England, will be a great help.

DAVENANT. I suppose it will; and the laurel crown too, will be a help. Germany's idea of art is somebody crowning somebody, and generally a fat woman does the crowning. But, Sebastian, why all this anxiety to pack me up and send me to Vienna? Is it that you want a holiday, and would like to bestow your holiday upon some other correspondent? Is there another? My good wishes in that event; only I beg of you to do your literary courting in your own name, that is all.

SEBASTIAN. No, you're wrong; there is nobody, unfortunately. . . . By the way, Lewis, Lady Letham called here this morning and asked me to remind you that she hopes you will accept her invitation to spend some time with her in Westmorland. She owns certain ranges of mountains, and these are at your disposal.

DAVENANT. For my inspiration, no doubt. And what is this new admirer like—her age?

SEBASTIAN. I should say from thirty to thirty-five; very refined, dainty, beautifully dressed, with exquisite hands and feet. She is staying with her sister, Lady Ewhurst.

DAVENANT. I think I shall write to her and ask her to come and see me while you're away.

SEBASTIAN. While I am away?

DAVENANT. Well, you see, somebody will have to go to Vienna to look after my play.

SEBASTIAN. Will you send me?

DAVENANT. Why not? Somebody must see that the play is properly rehearsed; you do not know German, but Gabrielle does, and she will help you. Now, let me see; this is the third—no, the fourth of April. I will give you a month's holiday—five weeks, if you like. For you, Sebastian, Gabrielle and her pleasure; for me, long country walks and long evenings with my old friend Ruskin. You will return within a month, and we will begin work again.

SEBASTIAN. What a delicious adventure! What a delicious adventure!

DAVENANT. Mine or yours?

SEBASTIAN. Mine, of course.

DAVENANT. It wouldn't be like you to refuse an adventure, so I'll give you some money. (*He sits at his desk.*) Here is a

note of credit on my bank. The journey is an expensive one, but it is really necessary that somebody should be by to look after my play. One moment, Sebastian; you will have to travel in my name.

SEBASTIAN. Why?

DAVENANT. Did you not say just now that she had created me out of my books with the aid of her imagination? Would you disappoint her? Go in my name, and unite the two temptations—youth and fame. You'll be irresistible.

SEBASTIAN. Introduce myself to Gabrielle as the author of *Elizabeth Cooper?*

DAVENANT. Why not, since I give you leave? She might love you if you went to her as my secretary, but not—well, not so ecstatically as she will if you go to her as the author of *Elizabeth Cooper.*

SEBASTIAN. But I'm a poet.

DAVENANT. And a very charming poet.

SEBASTIAN. She might like my verses and think me very clever, but she wouldn't believe that I had written all those books and plays.

DAVENANT. A woman in love believes easily. An imagination that is strong enough to straighten a dwarf's back will find no difficulty in adding a few years to your age. She will see crow's-feet where there are none, and traces of grey hair about the ears. After all, there are only twenty years between us, and

my appearance isn't known except to my personal friends; it has not travelled in photographs all over the world like that of most authors. By the way, you always write to the photographers who ask if they may add my portrait to their gallery of literary celebrities that I dislike modern photography, and will never sit until the daguerreotype is re-established.

SEBASTIAN. Yes, I write all that—(*greatly agitated.*) But the question now is, whether I am to go to Vienna?

DAVENANT. Well, then?

SEBASTIAN. I'm afraid I couldn't, Lewis. One day she would find out that I had lied to her, and would hate me and herself for ever afterwards.

DAVENANT. But you don't intend to pass your life in Vienna. (*Pause.*) A little while ago you called on me to remember that I was sacrificing a memory. Now, in my turn, I will remind you that you said: Nobody in love should be disappointed. The maker of such aphorisms is usually the first culprit.

(*Enter* MARTIN *with a packet in her hand.*)

MARTIN. This packet has just come, sir. (*She hands him the packet and goes out.*)

DAVENANT (*on opening the packet*). You cannot guess what is in this box.

SEBASTIAN. Of course I can; something from Gabrielle. I know it's from Gabrielle.

DAVENANT. Gabrielle has sent her portrait and a letter.

SEBASTIAN. Let me see it. Let me see it.

DAVENANT (*hands him the miniature—reading letter*). Only a short letter, in which she tells me what trains I am to travel by. Listen, Sebastian. "I won't wait much longer. I am not ashamed to rush after you, but I very soon will be ashamed of thinking so much of a man without even knowing if he deserves it. It makes me feel what I do not want to be—a little fool." You see, Sebastian, there is no time to be lost. (*He takes up the box.*) What! another miniature! (*The two men stand looking at* GABRIELLE'S *pictures in the middle of the stage.*)

SEBASTIAN. She is delightful, delicious, divine! (*Looking round at* DAVENANT.) What is yours like, Lewis?

DAVENANT. This one is a full length.

SEBASTIAN. Let me see it.

DAVENANT. I don't think I shall show it to you. No, I don't think that I ought to show it to you.

SEBASTIAN. But if I am going to Vienna?

DAVENANT (*with a change of tone*). So you're going to Vienna?

SEBASTIAN. Of course I'm going to Vienna. You've given me the money and the holiday. Let me see the portrait.

DAVENANT. You're going to Vienna, and will probably get the lady. I may surely keep one miniature!

SEBASTIAN. Let me see it.

DAVENANT. Sebastian, you want everything, but you're not going to get everything.

SEBASTIAN. Now, Lewis, don't spit gall into my cup of bliss.

DAVENANT. Both were addressed to me. By the way, Sebastian, there's no time to be lost; you have only just time to pack to catch the train at Southampton. I see you've already quite lost your head. But I hope you'll not forget my play. You'll write to me at once, and attend all the rehearsals.

SEBASTIAN, Yes, yes! Good-bye, Lewis!

(*He goes out.* DAVENANT *looks at one of his pictures; then he opens the window and rings the bell. Enter* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. If you look through the telescope in the library you will see Jupiter; then you can bring in the lamp.

MARTIN. Yes, sir.

(*Exit* MARTIN. DAVENANT *remains at the window, smoking, as the curtain falls.*)

ACT II

Scene:—DAVENANT'S *country house. A room opening out on a large garden. Light summer furniture. A river is seen in the distance. The sun is shining.*

A month later; about two in the afternoon.

When the curtain rises, DAVENANT *and* LADY LETHAM *are walking to and fro—in the garden.* DAVENANT *carries a pruning shears in his hand and is busy cutting roses.*

LADY LETHAM. My hands are full, you really must not cut any more.

DAVENANT. Just *one* more. (*He cuts another.*)

LADY LETHAM. What a beautiful rose, purple, almost black. (*Coming down stage.*) As I was saying, my sister and I were looked upon by mother in the light of lets and hindrances, and were kept in the schoolroom as long as possible, and when she had to bring us donwstairs we were given to understand that we must suit ourselves with husbands without delay; two years was the time allotted, convents were spoken of in case of failure, so we just had to take the men that proposed first, and Henrietta and I married tiresome men twenty years older than ourselves.

(DAVENANT *points to the sofa and they sit down.*)

DAVENANT. With the usual pleasant results, I suppose.

LADY LETHAM. Pleasant results! I don't understand.

DAVENANT. Don't you?

LADY LETHAM. Oh, I see. You're quite right, for within a year Henrietta and myself were engaged in arranging our own lives, my sister conducting hers discreetly with due regard to appearances, whereas I took every risk, seeming to court disaster, and would certainly have ended in getting myself talked about if——

DAVENANT. If the wise ant had not begged the foolish fly to bethink herself.

LADY LETHAM (*laughing*). Yes, just so. Henrietta sent for me, I've forgotten for what reason, something she had heard. A certain journey to Ireland; it may have been that; and seeing that I was in for a lecture and in hopes of cutting it short, I said, as we have to go to hell one day, the sooner we get there the better.

DAVENANT. To hell!

LADY LETHAM. I don't mean a theological hell. Henrietta's intention in sending for me was to make plain a truth often overlooked: that it was not absolutely necessary to forget to order one's husband's dinner if one intended to misbehave oneself in the afternoon.

DAVENANT. But your sister's counsel did not influence the foolish fly.

LADY LETHAM. Yes, it did. I think I was more careful; at least, for a time I was.

DAVENANT. And during that time, long or short, your husband had no cause to complain of the housekeeping, and you ceased to leave your letters lying about.

LADY LETHAM. I never left my letters lying about.

DAVENANT. I was speaking metaphorically. You introduced some circumspection into your love affairs.

LADY LETHAM. But I soon broke out again, and the long and the short of it is that, finding myself unable to play what Henrietta would call the game, I sent my lovers away. Henrietta was surprised, but I couldn't do else, being by nature intemperate.

DAVENANT. Intemperate!

LADY LETHAM. I do not mean that I was addicted to drink; if I had been I should have had to choose between total abstinence and continual intoxication. (*Pause.*) You've often asked me to tell you about myself; I have told you, and I think it is time for me to go. (*She rises, and they go up the stage together. In the middle of the stage* LADY LETHAM *stops suddenly.*) You're expecting Mr. Dayne back from Vienna?

DAVENANT. Yes, he is on his way back and will arrive tomorrow, perhaps this evening. He may come by the next train from Rockminster.

LADY LETHAM. So our long mornings together have come to an end. You will never dictate to me again.

DAVENANT. Am I not going to Westmorland in the autumn?

LADY LETHAM. I hope so indeed, but I shall not be able to act as your secretary, not in the mornings certainly; I never appear till luncheon; all the business of the house is transacted in my bedroom.

DAVENANT. Lord Letham's dinner is ordered there?

LADY LETHAM. Yes, and everybody else's dinner. I am afraid you cannot count upon my help. I should only disappoint you, and a man with ideas in his head waiting to have them taken down is apt to lose his temper.

DAVENANT, But after luncheon?

LADY LETHAM. After luncheon we shall go out driving, for you must see the mountain ranges that I told Mr. Dayne might inspire you, a suggestion that seemed to amuse him. Is it true that time and place count for little or nothing in the artist's life?

DAVENANT. You must not pay too much attention to what Mr. Dayne says.

LADY LETHAM. He told me that all your writing was done by dictation, so I said that I hoped he would come too. And now good-bye. (*She turns up stage.*)

DAVENANT. You will not forget that you're dining with me at Rockminster to-night?

LADY LETHAM. I shall not forget.

(*Exit by garden.* DAVENANT *goes out with her and comes back a moment after. He crosses the stage in silence.*)

DAVENANT (*coming down*). Has she her eye on Sebastian, I wonder; on that irresponsible youth who looks forward to telling me his adventures, which means that he is in love with Gabrielle?

(*Enter* MARTIN *with a letter,* L.)

MARTIN. Fletcher has just brought this letter, sir. It came yesterday to Rockminster, and, knowing that you weren't returning till this evening, he thought it better to bring it here.

DAVENANT. He did quite right. (*Takes the letter.*) Wait a moment. Sebastian's handwriting. (*He reads.*) This is too much! Really, this is too much. (*After a pause he bursts out laughing.*) What a splendid impertinence. He even wants to turn me out of my own house. (*Reading by fragments.*) "My dear cousin, my dear Lewis, you are so good, so kind. Lend me Claremont Villa for two days only, and as I am still Lewis Davenant will you oblige me by becoming Sebastian Dayne? We shall arrive——" WE!! "We shall arrive to-morrow." To-morrow. When did you say, Martin, this letter came?

MARTIN (*comes down a little*). Last night, sir.

DAVENANT. Then it's to-day. He may be here . . . they may be here at any moment. (*To* MARTIN.) Now, Martin, listen to me attentively. I can count upon you, I think.

MARTIN. It wasn't yesterday I entered your service, sir, and you know——

DAVENANT. Yes, I know. But to-day, Martin, it isn't on my account, alas! We must make way for the young folk. Now, this is what you are to do. Mr. Dayne may arrive at any moment, and with a lady. You know that he went to Vienna to look after my play, but I don't think I told you that he is travelling in my name. I can't go into the matter more explicitly, but when he comes you are to call him Mr. Davenant. (MARTIN *begins to laugh.*) It would take too long to explain. You are to stay here to look after them. And while they are here you are to speak to Mr. Dayne as Mr. Davenant. I think I can rely on you. Mr. Dayne will not stay more than two days.

MARTIN. And you, sir?

DAVENANT. I must get back to Rockminster. What time is the next train?

MARTIN. The train from Rockminster has just come in.

DAVENANT. And the train back will be going out in a few minutes; I shall just catch it.

MARTIN. But if you miss it, sir, and Mr. Davenant should arrive with the lady?

DAVENANT. Then, Martin, I am Mr. Sebastian Dayne. I have some books and papers to collect.

MARTIN. I will send them after you.

DAVENANT. You ought to know by this time that I never allow myself to be separated from my manuscripts.

(*Exit.*)

MARTIN (*with a gesture*). So he is to be Mr. Dayne for the next day or two. (*The bell rings.*) Well, I never. Here comes the new Mr. Davenant, I suppose.

(*Exit hurriedly. A moment after enter* SEBASTIAN *and the* COUNTESS VON HOENSTADT.)

MARTIN. Mr. Dayne will be down presently, sir.

(SEBASTIAN *and* GABRIELLE *come down the stage.* MARTIN *goes out.*)

GABRIELLE. Didst thou not hear her say, "Mr. Dayne"?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, she said Dayne. Lewis must have instructed her in accordance with my letter, saying that as I was still Mr. Davenant, I'd be obliged if he would become Mr. Dayne for a short while. As the joke began with him he thinks he had better see it through. How good he is, you see how good he is, and before it is too late——

GABRIELLE. I want to see this *vieux farceur* (how do you say *vieux farceur* in English—old joker?).

SEBASTIAN. You really must not speak of Mr. Davenant——

GABRIELLE. Who should be very proud to receive letters from a Vienna lady, and ought to have come himself, and not sent his secretary to make a little fool of me.

SEBASTIAN. I hope you're not sorry, Gabrielle. I'm certain that you wouldn't have cared for Lewis if he had gone to Vienna, would you? Do you think you would?

GABRIELLE. Do I think I would fall in love with a man who would not read my letters? No, never! Come hither and do not frown, but listen to me. Mr. Davenant must be punished.

SEBASTIAN. For what?

GABRIELLE. How many times have you asked me that question? And I have answered it always: for having dared to play a paltry prank on me, treating me as if I were a little servant-girl!

SEBASTIAN. My dear Gabrielle, Lewis Davenant never saw your letters. If he had, he would have gone to Germany, and—— (*He moves forward with the intention of taking her in his arms. She evades him.*)

GABRIELLE. You read him some pages from my letters. You told me so; and still he thought I was a little fool, and perhaps a cocotte. But, no. If he had thought that he would have gone to Vienna, for men like Mr. Davenant like cocottes much better than Viennese ladies; so it was quite well that he sent you instead of coming himself. Ach! my pictures should have told him I was neither one nor the other.

SEBASTIAN. All the arrangements were made before your pictures arrived.

GABRIELLE. *Mein lieber Gott!* that the man who wrote

Elizabeth Cooper should have thought that I could mistake his secretary for the author of seventeen volumes! *Mein lieber Gott* sounds better than your God *tout court.*

SEBASTIAN. I don't know whether it does or not. But that door may open any minute and Lewis Davenant walk in; so once more I beg of you to remember that he did not foresee what has happened; he couldn't have.

GABRIELLE. You remind me of a child who would play a prank upon his parents, but gets frightened at the last moment. But I'm not a child; and if you do not want me to go straight back to Vienna, you will tell him the story exactly as we prepared it on the battlements of the castle at Heidelberg, exactly word for word.

(*Enter* DAVENANT.)

DAVENANT. So you've come! Your note arrived only a few minutes ago, and after reading it I ran upstairs to get some books and papers, and now I shall have only just time to catch the train; so if you'll excuse me——

SEBASTIAN. My dear Sebastian, you needn't hurry away, for, run as fast as ever you can, you'll not succeed in catching a train that left the station as we came up the road. Gabrielle, allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Sebastian Dayne, also my secretary.

DAVENANT (*bowing*). Have you had a pleasant journey?

SEBASTIAN. Very. We left our luggage at Rockminster, and

came on here with just enough for two days. (*To* GABRIELLE.) Dearest, I am sure you would like to go to your room. (*To* MARTIN.) What room have you ready for—for—madam?

MARTIN (*hesitatingly*). The room——

DAVENANT. The room overlooking the river.

SEBASTIAN. That will do splendidly, quite right.

MARTIN. If madam will come with me——

GABRIELLE. I will leave you with your secretary for a little while. (*In a low tone.*) Dearest, I love you!

(*Exeunt* MARTIN *and* GABRIELLE.)

SEBASTIAN (*after following* GABRIELLE *a few steps, returns rapidly to* DAVENANT.) Thank you, Lewis. (*He takes both his hands.*) I don't know how to thank you. I hope we haven't put you out too much?

DAVENANT (*in very good humour*). Not at all; stay as long as you please, Sebastian. I am delighted to see you. Your letter didn't reach me until ten minutes ago, and after giving Martin some necessary instructions I was just about to run away. But we have no time to lose. Tell me, and tell me quickly, is that Gabrielle?

SEBASTIAN. Didn't you know her? She is very like her miniature. (*Takes the miniature from his pocket.*)

DAVENANT. I hardly saw her—and in a hat! My dear Sebastian, you have managed this affair splendidly. Now, admit! —wasn't it a good idea of mine to send you to Vienna? You

appear very much in love with each other. One could see that from the way she turned to look at you as she went out. It is all delightful, delightful! I congratulate you, Sebastian! Show me the miniature. Yes, it's very like her. And now tell me everything in a few words.

SEBASTIAN. It would take too long.

DAVENANT. But I must hear all about it.

SEBASTIAN. You want to know how we met?

DAVENANT. Of course I do.

SEBASTIAN. In the most original way . . . in the train.

DAVENANT (*more and more amused*). No!

SEBASTIAN. I got into the train at Ostend, and within an hour's journey of Vienna, at a station called—I can't remember the name—three ladies and a gentleman got into my carriage.

DAVENANT. One was——

SEBASTIAN. Gabrielle returning to Vienna to meet me.

DAVENANT. To meet Lewis Davenant, since it was me she expected—but to meet you, since it is you she loves. But I beg your pardon. Go on.

SEBASTIAN. Well, I was about to say that the gentleman who accompanied the ladies was very distinguished-looking, an old friend of the family, Baron von Allmen is his name. The two ladies, the Countess Bertha von Maurog and the Baronne von Studenberg.

DAVENANT. I see you already possess some knowledge of Viennese society. I suppose you met these people afterwards?

SEBASTIAN. Oh, yes, many times.

DAVENANT. Well, go on with your story.

SEBASTIAN. I helped them to arrange their luggage in the racks, and, seeing that I was English, Gabrielle—for it was she—spoke to me in English, and we hadn't been talking together for long before I began to ask myself where I had seen her face before—for I had seen it before, of that I was sure—but for a long time I couldn't think where. All of a sudden I remembered the miniature. But it seemed too improbable. The Baron was explaining something to the Countess von Maurog and the Baronne von Studenberg; Gabrielle did not take part in this conversation, nor show the slightest interest in it, and I began to wonder how this was; and whilst I was wondering I caught her stealing glances in my direction, when she thought I wasn't looking.

DAVENANT. Magnetic influence!

SEBASTIAN. You can imagine my feelings. Then I had another inspiration. I took the miniature out of the pocket of my coat and sat openly comparing it with her—rather rude, but in the circumstance it was the only thing to do.

DAVENANT. Delightful!

SEBASTIAN. I saw her blushing, and all of a sudden, with that exquisite spontaneity and charming accent which you will

appreciate when she returns, she said, "You're Lewis Davenant."

DAVENANT. You were fairly caught.

SEBASTIAN. I assure you, Lewis, that during the journey I had thought it all out, and had decided to present myself to her in my own name.

DAVENANT. But you had no time? You were taken by surprise, and in a moment it was too late.

SEBASTIAN. Too late, yes; for a moment after she was talking to me of half a dozen things at the same time, and introducing me to her friends as Mr. Lewis Davenant who had come to Vienna for the performance of *Elizabeth Cooper*.

DAVENANT. Tell me something about my play.

SEBASTIAN. I wrote you a long letter about it, and on the evening of the performance, when I was called before the curtain——

DAVENANT. You weren't called before the curtain! I cannot believe it!

SEBASTIAN. Yes; and I made a speech.

DAVENANT. You told them that you had come to speak to them in the name of England?

SEBASTIAN. I said nothing about England on that occasion, but the next day at the banquet.

DAVENANT. Ho, ho! There was a banquet, then?

SEBASTIAN. A magnificent one!

DAVENANT. Your health was drunk in champagne?

SEBASTIAN. Of course.

DAVENANT. You were crowned with laurels?

SEBASTIAN. A crown of gilt laurels, which I hope to show you when——

DAVENANT. Come, come, Sebastian, you don't expect me to believe this nonsense, this grotesque, impossible tale?

SEBASTIAN. I don't know why you should doubt my word, Lewis. You sent me to Vienna as Lewis Davenant so that your fame might hide my defects from Gabrielle von Hoenstadt. I went, I saw, I conquered. I have brought her back to you so that you may see for yourself; you have seen her. But you don't believe your own eyes; why, then, should you believe my story?

DAVENANT (*taken aback*). Go on with your story, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN. I'll say no more. A team of dray-horses will not drag another word out of me.

DAVENANT. Come now, Sebastian, I didn't mean——

SEBASTIAN. An incredulous audience damps the story-teller. Moreover, why should I tell it? The lady is upstairs; she will come down presently; you can hear it from her. She may be able to convince you, but, if she can't, I hope you'll not be so impolite as to tell her that she is telling lies.

DAVENANT. When I said I didn't believe, I meant that you had succeeded beyond my expectations. I begin to perceive in you the true, ever-resurgent type—Don Juan in person.

SEBASTIAN. Again you offend me, Lewis! I am no Don Juan, but a devout lover, who will be faithful unto death, whatever happens.

DAVENANT (*looking at* SEBASTIAN *askance*). But the day will come when you will have to tell her.

SEBASTIAN. Lewis, you are very cruel. You sent me to Vienna.

DAVENANT. But you will have to tell her.

SEBASTIAN. Lewis, I can see you are gloating over your joke.

(*He turns to go.* DAVENANT *brings him back, and they go down the stage together.*)

DAVENANT. You did not dare to tell her in the carriage on the way to the Museum, as I can well understand, so charming did she seem under her long-fringed parasol. In the Gallery you were surrounded by tourists, and she chattered so pleasantly of the masterpieces that you had no heart to trouble her with a disagreeable piece of news. On another occasion when you were sitting together in a restaurant at dinner the moment seemed most propitious, the confession was on the tip of your tongue; but resolutions vanish at the sight of a mauve scarf wound about Gabrielle's arms and shoulders.

SEBASTIAN. But you have not seen her arms; as white as an angel's, arms and bosom, and as slight.

DAVENANT. Arms that have been about you for the last time

certainly, so I shall be glad to hear that you have grown a little weary of them. What! Not yet? So serious as all that, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, Lewis, every day I am more and more in love with her, and every moment brings the fatal moment nearer when I must tell her.

DAVENANT. But she loves you for yourself.

SEBASTIAN. I hope so. I believe she does.

DAVENANT. You believe; but you have misgivings.

SEBASTIAN. I dread the unpleasant quarter of an hour, Lewis.

DAVENANT. If you get off with a quarter of an hour you'll be lucky, and now I must ask you what excuse you are going to give her for not telling her sooner.

SEBASTIAN. There is no use thinking out what one is going to say, the spell of the moment will put the right words into my mouth.

DAVENANT. But you do not intend waiting till she is seated in the train to bob your head into the carriage window and cry: I am not Lewis Davenant, but Sebastian Dayne, his cousin. That is not the way to treat a lady, surely!

SEBASTIAN. Lewis, you are more than unkind, you are cruel. I know I must tell her sooner or later. But we're not going to part because I did not write *Elizabeth Cooper*. I cannot believe it; it would be out of all reason for her to send me away for so

trivial a reason. Forgive me, Lewis. I intend no disparagement of your book. You have had many affairs with women, tell me what to do. Pull me out of the scrape you pushed me into.

DAVENANT. Women build a man up out of their imaginations, as you have heard me say on more than one occasion, and the shock when she hears the news will be great, no doubt, but even if she survives it, what then? You will have to part, unless, indeed . . . You don't intend to marry her?

SEBASTIAN. We are married.

DAVENANT (*who up to this point has been amused, immediately becomes serious*). You've married her, and in the name of Lewis Davenant? My dear Sebastian, this is a piece of folly.

SEBASTIAN. We won't discuss that point; one's follies are so essentially personal. As well ask me why my eyebrows——

DAVENANT. You mean that you went through some ceremony of marriage?

SEBASTIAN. No, the marriage was all right. There was a church, a priest, and a book where we signed our names, so I suppose it was all right, but I'm not very well up in the marriage laws.

DAVENANT. Well, my good friend, you will soon have an excellent opportunity of learning them.

SEBASTIAN. You will be able to advise me? Lewis, Lewis, I beg of you.

DAVENANT. I cannot advise you; the situation is really more than I can grasp.

SEBASTIAN. You'll be able to grasp it better if you will——

DAVENANT. The one thing that concerns me now is that you have married her in my name, and I am not a marrying man.

SEBASTIAN. Try for a moment to imagine what my situation was.

DAVENANT. I am trying to think what could have made you do such a ridiculous thing, but I cannot arrive at any conclusion.

SEBASTIAN. You didn't reproach me for allowing Gabrielle to introduce me to her friends as the author of *Elizabeth Cooper*, did you?

DAVENANT. In the train you were taken by surprise, but you weren't taken by surprise the morning you were married. You knew you were going to be married.

SEBASTIAN. I had no faintest idea I was going to be married.

DAVENANT. Were you married under the influence of a drug or in your sleep?

SEBASTIAN. No, but it was quite unexpected.

DAVENANT. You speak as if you had been caught in a shower of rain.

SEBASTIAN. That is exactly what happened. We went for an excursion to an island in the Danube, a long narrow island with a village running down the middle. We were passing a church and were admiring it. Suddenly Gabrielle said: "How

would you like to come into that church and be married to me?"

DAVENANT. Wait a moment. What had you said to lead up to that suggestion?

SEBASTIAN. Vague things, but as she made the suggestion you would not have had me hang back, would you?

DAVENANT. And then?

SEBASTIAN. Then she went into the church.

DAVENANT. With you?

SEBASTIAN. With me, of course, and we found an old priest asleep in the chair. I cried: "Hierat," "hierat," and he took us into the sacristy, where he asked us if we could show him our papers. Gabrielle showed him a visiting card; he seemed loth to marry us on such slight testimony of our identity, but Gabrielle talked him over.

DAVENANT. You never said a word?

SEBASTIAN. I do not know much German.

DAVENANT (*throws up his arms*). Is that how people usually marry in Vienna?

SEBASTIAN. Sometimes.

DAVENANT. However they manage these things in Austria, these marriages in England often end in the law courts.

SEBASTIAN. A man should always be willing to suffer for the woman he loves. I'm ready.

DAVENANT. To go to prison, to cut your throat. If I had gone to Vienna this wouldn't have happened.

SEBASTIAN. Because she wouldn't have loved you.

DAVENANT. I'm not so sure of that. But you must tell her who you are, and the sooner the better.

SEBASTIAN. You think, then, that the moment she comes downstairs I should introduce her to the real Davenant?

DAVENANT. No; not just now.

SEBASTIAN. Perhaps you would like me to leave you to explain to her.

DAVENANT. This is no occasion for levity. It may be that I did wrong to advise you to go to Vienna and to introduce yourself in my name, but I did not tell you to marry her in my name; and now I am leaving.

SEBASTIAN. Don't go, Lewis; stay. She may forgive me if you will undertake to explain to her my youth, my inexperience. No one can explain a situation as well as you can. You have had so much knowledge of life. In your books——

DAVENANT. Once more I must insist on some seriousness. You will have to explain this matter yourself; nobody can do it but you. S-sh! Here she is.

(*Enter* GABRIELLE. *Her hair is pinned up in front, but falls over her shoulders.*)

GABRIELLE. You will excuse me, Mr. Dayne, for I did not know you were here, and came to ask my husband to make my hair. I am *si maladroite.* I am not able to make my hair alone,

and, darling, your parlourmaid is not used to attending on ladies.

SEBASTIAN. She has broken the comb I gave you.

GABRIELLE. The comb that you bought for me at Strasbourg; I am sorry.

(SEBASTIAN *arranges her hair.*)

Is it unlucky in England to break a comb when you enter a strange house? I hope not. (*Gets up and goes to mirror and then comes back to Sebastian.*) Make it a little higher, dear.

SEBASTIAN. Sebastian, have you ever seen more beautiful hair? Scented, soft as silk; such thick, brown, glossy hair, curling like the tendrils of the Anise.

GABRIELLE. What is that plant, dear? (*He hesitates.*) You've forgotten; it makes no difference. (*Goes to the mirror again.*) If Martin had been able to make my hair as well as you I should have begun to suspect that mine were not the first little she-feet (*looking at the carpet*) to tread these roses underfoot. Do you say she-feet in English?

DAVENANT. We do not specify the sex, merely feet. (*He moves towards the door.*)

GABRIELLE, No, you must not go, Mr. Dayne. There are a great many things I should like to ask you about. Are you not my cousin now?

DAVENANT. So I am, and your secretary should you ever require one.

GABRIELLE. I will dictate to you in German. I am sure you know German, Mr. Dayne, and it will improve your German to gossip with me. Is gossip right? Do you say gossip in English?

DAVENANT. We say gossip.

GABRIELLE. Just as I have said. I should like to gossip with you. Will you take a chair, Mr. Dayne, and gossip in English with me? Now do stay and tell me——

DAVENANT. What would you have me tell you?

GABRIELLE. Of the advice that I am sure you gave to Lewis when my miniature came, for you have had many affairs—I can read it in your eyes, Mr. Dayne—many affairs with ladies, real ladies, ladies in society, not cocottes. Now what did you tell him that I was, a little fool or a cocotte, which? Be truthful, Mr. Dayne, for I can read your face, for it's an open one.

DAVENANT. When your miniature arrived I said that he was very fortunate indeed to have written books that could bring him presents from such a beautiful woman.

GABRIELLE. Did you say that truly, Mr. Dayne? I'm not at all sure, but no matter. What I would like to know is if you think the miniature does me justice? Lewis says that it does not, and I believe he is right. I always look dreadful and *affectée,* or swollen and greedy, on photographs. I do not look so toothachish in reality, do I, Mr. Dayne? But I am not going to ask you for compliments; I know you could not do else than tell me that I am very pretty, but that is not what I want

to hear. I should like you to tell me if the lady in the ivory is a woman who would deceive her lover, and what terrible revenge she would wreak on him if he were to deceive her. You don't know—how could you be expected to know? You see, Mr. Dayne, I am a little stupid sometimes, but I like to be like that. Pay no attention to me, but just go on thinking of what is in your head. Your head is full of Lewis's books, is it not? It must be, since you are his secretary. We were talking about my miniature, and I was about to tell you that it was painted when I was living with my husband. He carried me off from the convent to a castle in the forest, where I never saw anyone but an old nurse and *les chasseurs*, men that came to hunt the wild boar and the deer. It was very tedious, but very romantic, like your Shakespeare. I used to sit at my casement thinking that it was a play of his and myself Desdemona; but she loved her black man, and I did not love my hunter, who never knew a day's illness until he died. That was what his great friend that shot him used to say: Kuno never knew a day's illness till he died. It was an accident, and I will tell you how it happened one of these days, when I am rested, for it is a very long story.

SEBASTIAN. Darling, let me persuade you to go to your room and lie down for a little while.

GABRIELLE. I am not tired. But I cannot tell the accident that my husband met with while hunting in the forest. It sounds too much like William Rufus, and I want to talk about *Elizabeth*

Cooper. After my husband's death in the forest I went to live in Vienna, and seeing the same people day after day began to tire me almost as much as the deer and the boars in the forest. It was impossible for me to see them any more, and so I said to myself: "I will make some new acquaintances," and went to the library and began to pick out English heroes from the Tauchnitz edition. I found *Douglas*, *Richard Feverel*, later on *Chandos*, and a thousand more, and one day the librarian handed me *Elizabeth Cooper*. The name struck my imagination; it is such a wonderful name, so romantic, so—I can't say all I want to say in English. Ach! it is so tiresome. *Elizabeth Cooper* is so——

DAVENANT. Evocative.

GABRIELLE. So evocative, of course. (*To* SEBASTIAN.) Why did you not give me the word, Lewis? You should always give me the words I want in English. Thank you, Mr. Dayne. If Lewis had written a book for Austrian countesses especially he could not have succeeded better. For weeks I wanted to write to him, but somehow I didn't dare, and when his first letter arrived my hands turned as cold as ice and my cheeks burning hot. Is it not a funny thing to have cold hands and a hot face at the same time? A moment after I made gambols and pinched my dog because I was so happy. Tell me, Mr. Dayne, was Lewis really a little pleased when I first wrote to him? Did he tell you his first idea about me? I shall never forget what great impression his first letter made on me. I got it the 7th of November, on a Sat-

urday. Nearly every year something happens to me on the 7th of November. It is a dangerous day for me.

DAVENANT. The Countess speaks exactly as she writes.

GABRIELLE. So Lewis has shown you my letters.

DAVENANT. He read me a few sentences, only a few. But you see my secretarial work enables me to catch the character of a writer in the first words, almost.

SEBASTIAN. My dear Gabrielle, I insisted that Sebastian should hear a few sentences, so overjoyed was I.

GABRIELLE. Don't trouble to excuse yourself, Lewis; I do not mind in the least your having shown my letters to Mr. Dayne. In fact, I knew you had done so.

SEBASTIAN. How did you know that?

GABRIELLE. Well, my darling, didn't you tell me one day?

DAVENANT. If I may dare to put a question?

GABRIELLE. Do put questions to me, and I will answer them truthfully.

DAVENANT. Were your imaginations fulfilled?

GABRIELLE. I did not imagine so young a man.

DAVENANT. And if he had been an older man?

GABRIELLE. I think I should have forgiven him for the sake of *Elizabeth Cooper*. I do not like very young men, so you need not be afraid to tell me you are fifty; for I once had an admirer who was sixty-nine. Young men are all *poseurs* or hypocrites.

Oh! I have no patience with them! I wish I could throw something to their heads!

DAVENANT. Have you not read any other books by Mr. Davenant? Only *Elizabeth Cooper?*

GABRIELLE. I did not buy any more of Lewis's books. I was afraid that they might disappoint me, and I do not like to be disappointed, Mr. Dayne; it gives me nerves. When you know me better you will understand how bitterly I resent any disappointment. But I know *Elizabeth Cooper* so well, every scene in it, and I should have visited all the places he has described, only there were reasons that kept me in Vienna. The man who shot my husband was said to be in love with me—which was not true; and my family—— But there is no necessity for going into that story now; another time, Mr. Dayne. I want now to talk to you about *Elizabeth Cooper.* It was she who gave me my liberty from Vienna, and so I said to Lewis, "We must visit all the towns where she and her lover stayed at on our wedding journey." Elizabeth travelled a good deal in Germany, but while I was upstairs changing my frock, making myself look a little tidy, Lewis was telling you of our wedding journey, I suppose? I hope he didn't forget the old priest and the island on the Danube? For a moment I was afraid he would not unite us, but I managed very well, and persuaded him—didn't I, darling? And then the Danube! Lewis had never seen the Danube before. It seems to me so strange, for to go to Germany and not to see the Danube is

hardly like going to Germany. He had not seen the Rhine; so I asked him, "How is it you never make mistakes in German in your books?" and he said that you put his German right always; and that is how I learnt, dear Mr. Dayne, that you know German. I took him to the old town that Elizabeth liked so much, and where everything is the same as in the Middle Ages. And thou wilt always remember, Lewis, the terrace on which we sat overlooking the Rhine? Only one thing was wanted for perfection—Lewis does not know German. It was very sad, for I wanted to read poems to him—Goethe's poems and Heine's, and some poems of Schiller's, too; but if you had been there you would have helped me to translate them. You speak German, I know you do, and write it well, for there are no mistakes in Lewis's books. So why was it you did not come with him to Vienna? We could have travelled together, us three, so agreeably; for when I was tired of talking to one, I could have talked to the other, making all the people jealous and angry, as they would be at the sight of three happy people living in the world together. It is a pity, Lewis, you did not bring your cousin secretary, for with him to help us we might have come back with a book full of travel. But tell me, Mr. Dayne, am I to believe all Lewis tells me that he can only write when you are with him? Is that true?

DAVENANT. Lewis writes his own poetry, but when I am with him he can only write prose.

GABRIELLE. How extraordinary! But if you were to die, Mr. Dayne, what would happen to Lewis?

DAVENANT. As well ask me what would happen to me if Lewis were to die.

GABRIELLE. It is truly very strange, and just like life; so I will not ask any more questions, for it is useless to ask questions about life. Don't you think so, Mr. Dayne? But you would like me to tell you where we went after seeing the Rhine; we went on to Heidelberg, and from Heidelberg we journeyed to Strasbourg; we travelled all night. But you who have travelled so much, Mr. Dayne, do not need that I should tell you the names of all these places we have been to. I would sooner you should tell me what you were doing in this pretty cottage by a river all the time we were away. For one cannot look at a river all day. Have any ladies been to see you?

DAVENANT. Ladies come to see the author, not the secretary. And my time was passed, not in looking on the river, but in hard work, copying out a new book by Lewis Davenant, which I am prone to believe will exceed in interest everything that he has written before, even *Elizabeth Cooper.*

GABRIELLE. You must tell me about this book at once; I am impatient, and I think I said I bitterly resent being disappointed. How, Lewis darling, was it that you never spoke to me of this new book?

SEBASTIAN. We were seeing places and things, and talking

about each other; there was no time for literature. A written story is so faint compared with the real story.

GABRIELLE. How modest he is, Mr. Dayne, and shy of talking about his work; but he has to talk to you about his work, since you are his secretary. Tell me, was it here in this room that he wrote *Elizabeth Cooper?* Darling, how was it that thou didst not tell me it was here—that I was in the very room in which you wrote your book? You should have stopped me on the threshold, saying, "There is the table at which I wrote, the chair on which I sat, the inkstand into which I dipped my pen." All these things are related about Goethe. But the manuscript, where is it?—in these drawers? I want to see it. (*She goes to the table and pulls out drawers and takes out a heap of papers.*)

SEBASTIAN (*crossing a little hurriedly*). My dear, you must not upset those papers.

GABRIELLE. But I am looking for the manuscript of your new book. What is the title of it, Mr. Dayne? You must tell me the title of it, Mr. Dayne—only the title.

DAVENANT. *Van Birds.*

GABRIELLE. But what does that mean? Birds kept in a van?

DAVENANT. No, the first of the flock, from Vanguard. But you'll not find the manuscript there; it's in Rockminster.

GABRIELLE. Well, let me see the manuscript of *Elizabeth Cooper.*

SEBASTIAN. Why should you want to see the manuscript? You have read the book.

GABRIELLE. But I do want to see the manuscript. And is it not natural that I should like to see the manuscript of the book that made me love him? Will you try to find the manuscript of *Elizabeth Cooper*, Mr. Dayne?

SEBASTIAN. We have no manuscripts here, I assure you, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE. Then I will look at your books. (*She gets up on a ladder.*) Here is the three-volume edition, and the six-shilling edition, and the two-shilling picture board edition. Why, there is an *édition de luxe*. I had no idea you had written so many books, darling! How old were you when you began to write?

SEBASTIAN. I think I was about sixteen.

GABRIELLE. And you are now twenty-seven.

SEBASTIAN. I shall soon be eight-and-twenty.

GABRIELLE. And in ten years you have written seventeen books. How very extraordinary! Now which of these is your first book?

SEBASTIAN. My first book was a volume of poems.

GABRIELLE. I am disappointed! I cannot tell you, Lewis, how disappointed I am! Mr. Dayne, you will understand.

DAVENANT. Truly, life is full of disappointments. If you will tell me, Countess, in what particular way you are disappointed, I may be able to help you.

GABRIELLE. You are not as clever a man as I thought you were, Mr. Dayne, else you would have understood at once that I came to England to inspire a great literature.

DAVENANT. But you found the literature you hoped to inspire already written?

GABRIELLE. Alas!

DAVENANT. He is seven-and-twenty, and will not stop at seventeen volumes.

GABRIELLE (*still sitting on the top step of the ladder*). Do you think I shall be able to inspire him, Mr. Dayne? If you do, perhaps I had better tell you, who are his secretary, the kind of book I should like him to write. Something that no author has yet quite done to my satisfaction. The story about a married couple, but a long, beautiful, might-be-true story. Is might-be-true a real word, Mr. Dayne? Well, you and Lewis must try not to be envious when I invent a new word. You see, I don't want the wife to be a saint, nor the husband an angel. I just want them to be man and wife, to quarrel as well as to kiss, to have temptations both. But the end must be a happy one, Lewis. I don't want the Kreutzer Sonata over again. And on some children I must insist.

DAVENANT. How many?

GABRIELLE. I don't know how many; perhaps none at all when the story comes to be written. You see, I am always changing my moods and opinions, Mr. Dayne. It is amusing, and

fatiguing too; it is like changing one's dress a dozen times a day. (DAVENANT *moves up the stage.*) But must you really leave us? Lewis, shall we go to the station with Mr. Dayne?

SEBASTIAN. If you want to, dear.

GABRIELLE (*coming down the steps*). Well, let us get our hats. You men keep your hats in the hall. Lewis, will you go upstairs and fetch my hat?

(*Exit* SEBASTIAN.)

GABRIELLE (*to* DAVENANT). When you asked me if I was surprised at Lewis's youth, I answered—I've forgotten what I answered, it doesn't matter in the least, for I only speak what I mean at the moment, which in most cases turns out to be the opposite of what I really mean. I had expected to see a man of fifty-five at least.

DAVENANT. And you never doubted that you were speaking to the author of those seventeen volumes?

GABRIELLE. I may have doubted at first sight, but not after the first five minutes of conversation, for Lewis talks just as he writes. Don't you think so, Mr. Dayne?

DAVENANT. Very like his books—the living counterpart.

GABRIELLE. If you speak like that, Mr. Dayne, I shall think you're jealous of your cousin.

DAVENANT. I am jealous of my cousin, but not of his writings.

GABRIELLE. Of what, then, are you jealous—that I didn't

invite you to Vienna? Now tell me your age; I had forgotten to ask it before, Mr. Dayne. I was born the 6th of September, 18 . . . so, you see, my age is quite respectable. I'll tell you a secret, Mr. Dayne, one that I have told to no one before. When I was born they saw at once I wasn't a boy, and they were disappointed, as a son was wanted; and I was called Gabrielle, for they think in Austria that when a girl is called Gabrielle the next child will be a boy.

DAVENANT. May I call you Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE. If you really like it so much, I shall not be offended. But I am not like any of his heroines, *quelle mal chance.* My eyes are too small and myope, and my hair is brown. Do you like brown hair or fair? And does fair mean beautiful or blonde? I should have asked these questions before, and also why you kept the miniature in which at full length I am. Tell me, my good Mr. Dayne, why?

SEBASTIAN (*entering*). Here is your hat and cloak, Gabrielle, and if you start at once you will catch the train to Rockminster, and Mr. Dayne will show you the manuscripts and some pictures well worth seeing, too.

GABRIELLE. But why should I wish to go to Rockminster, leaving you here? I don't want to leave you, Lewis. (*Coming down the stage.*) Now at once I must hear what the meaning of all this may be? You're not jealous because I like speaking to your secretary?

(*Exit* DAVENANT.)

SEBASTIAN. Not jealous, but wearied of this mystification which takes in nobody. You do not think that Davenant does not guess that you know he is Davenant?

GABRIELLE. My dear Sebastian, he does not suspect, it—no, never.

SEBASTIAN. You said nothing that would lead him to suppose you knew, did you? I wish you had, for the longer the joke is kept up the more angry he will be.

GABRIELLE. I think Mr. Davenant already sees that I am not the little fool he took me for. But he must be punished, for everybody should be punished for being stupid.

SEBASTIAN. Ever since we set foot in England you have been talking of punishing Mr. Davenant. But how is he to be punished?

GABRIELLE. By being made to feel in love with me.

SEBASTIAN. And if, in making him fall in love with you, you were to fall in love with him?

GABRIELLE. I could never love anybody but you, Sebastian. But where is that dear Mr. Davenant? Something must have frightened him away, for he has gone without daring to bid me good-bye. Yet I didn't say anything dreadful to him. Is he easily shocked? One of my friends tells me that he never knew a lady who talked such dreadful things as I do with my eyes, looking so innocently all the while. You must run after Mr. Daven-

ant and bring him back, for my walk with him must not be spoilt.

SEBASTIAN. I do not know where to run.

GABRIELLE. Martin will tell us. (*Rings.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

GABRIELLE. Can you tell me quickly if Mr. Dayne has gone to the station to get the train? Or has he gone to the garden to gather me some flowers? (*To* SEBASTIAN.) How nice of him, for men so seldom like flowers!

MARTIN. Lady Letham called, your ladyship, and Mr. Dayne has gone back to Rockminster with her in her carriage.

GABRIELLE. We must pursue them in another carriage.

SEBASTIAN. My dear Gabrielle! Thank you, Martin, that will do.

(*Exit* MARTIN.)

GABRIELLE. Is Lady Letham Mr. Davenant's mistress? But that cannot be, for you told me, darling, that Mr. Davenant was no longer as fond as he used to be of *la femme de trente ans.* Such a *mal chance!* Just as I was beginning to be one in the full sense of the word! Or did Mr. Davenant take Lady Letham away because she loves you? And Mr. Davenant was afraid I should make a scene. I don't make scenes, not as you in England; I merely cry, and then my nose gets swollen and I have hardly any eyes. You will not make me cry, darling, by being unfaithful to me? But of what are you thinking? Of some women that you've loved a little? Tell me the truth, dear, and I will forgive you if it

was long ago, and if she was not very pretty, nor very young; middle-aged I should prefer it, but not dead, for the dead have a power that the living ones have not. You didn't desire her, and leave her with a baby which you will ask me to adopt? That I shouldn't like doing—no, never; so please don't ask it. But why, darling, are you making such naughty nostrils? You remind me of my husband that was, and, though we are married, you said you would always be my lover.

SEBASTIAN. I am thinking, Gabrielle, that, despite the nonsense you talk—perhaps on account of it—there is nobody in the world for me but you, and I am asking myself if you will follow me back to happiness. We have been happy—say that we've been happy, Gabrielle, for a little while!

GABRIELLE. Yes, Sebastian; but what do you want me to do?

SEBASTIAN. Let us go back to Austria, and to the time when I used to sit at your feet telling you the story of my life.

GABRIELLE. But you have told me the story of your life.

SEBASTIAN. No, no, not all of it.

GABRIELLE. What secret hast thou kept from me, villain? (*Looking round.*) Ach! why did Mr. Davenant go away like this?

SEBASTIAN. You were interested in him the moment you came into the room. The most capricious woman in the world. Men are your amusement, your pleasure; the old succeed the young, and the ugly the beautiful. You said you had cold finger-

tips and hot cheeks the moment you met me in the railway train, and when you came into the room and saw Mr. Davenant——

GABRIELLE. I like Mr. Davenant because his eyes are kind and his teeth are so nice, but I had not cold finger-tips and hot cheeks.

SEBASTIAN. Go to Rockminster and be amused for the afternoon.

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN. Mr. Godby, sir.

(*Enter* GODBY)

SEBASTIAN. Godby!

GODBY. Excuse me, ma'am, but, you see, I've been up after these letters afore now.

GABRIELLE. I'm afraid I don't understand.

GODBY. No more did Mr. Davenant. You see, it ain't possible for me to go back to Priscilla a second time without them letters, and they promised to let me 'ave them the last time I came up from Southampton.

GABRIELLE. What letters?

GODBY. Why, Priscilla's letters before she and I was spliced. You see, ma'am, it wasn't the fault of the young gentleman; it was Priscilla what commenced the correspondence over having read Mr. D.'s books. I 'ave forgotten the name. Give me a moment.

GABRIELLE. *Elizabeth Cooper.*

GODBY. That was the book that fair turned 'er 'ead, and 'e sent 'er heaps of letters and pomes. And now that she 'as become Mrs. G., she has been worrying of me to get them letters back. She's afeard he might publish them; she says you never know what these literary gents will do with letters, and this is the second time I 'ave come up from Southampton after them.

GABRIELLE. Was there a poem beginning "After many days, and after many tears"?

GODBY. Well, ma'am, I can't say there was, though she 'as read them to me often enough. You see, I 'ave no head for poetry. "After many days, and after many tears," yer say? There were plenty of tears in the pomes, and sighs and 'earts and kisses.

GABRIELLE. Thank you, Mr. Godby, that's all I want to know. Now I'll leave you to settle your business with this gentleman. (*She goes towards the door.*)

SEBASTIAN. Gabrielle, I can explain.

GABRIELLE. I prefer to listen to Mr. Davenant's explanation.

(*Exit* L.)

SEBASTIAN (*looking at his watch*). There is a train in a few minutes. She'll just catch it. I must run!

GODBY. Oh, no, you don't, not till I gets Priscilla's letters.

SEBASTIAN. But they are in Rockminster, my good man! Let me go.

GODBY. Not if I knows it. We'll go back to Rockminster together.

SEBASTIAN. If you run we can catch the train.

GODBY. Run! I likes to hear you talk about running, and to a man that has walked all the way from Rockminster. This be the 'ottest day we've 'ad this summer. Run, indeed!

SEBASTIAN. Let me go! Let me go!

GODBY. Pull that bell and ask your parlourmaid to bring me up a glass of ale.

SEBASTIAN. There isn't time for drinking ale.

GODBY. Out of this I don't stir till I gets it!

(*The train whistle is heard.*)

SEBASTIAN. There! we've missed the train! (*He rings the bell.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

SEBASTIAN. Martin, will you bring a tankard of ale and two glasses?

(MARTIN *goes out, looking very astonished.*)

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III

Scene: *Same as in Act I.*

When the curtain rises, DAVENANT *is on the stage in evening dress.*

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN *and* GODBY.)

GODBY. 'Ere we are—the very room—'member it jush as if it was yesseday. Beg pardon, sir—Godby, second mate on the *Hannah Maria.* Don't you remember Godby, sir? Came for Priscilla's letters 'bout month ago.

DAVENANT. Yes, Mr. Godby, I remember.

GODBY. Well, to make a long story short, Shecktery breaks his word—no letters—Priscilla getting more and more peevish every day. No letters—'ave to come up again from Southampton. Shecktery 'broad, self at Claremont Villa; way I go, all sails set, and over'aul Shecktery with his young lady; bit of a squall; Shecktery would 'ave weighed anchor and gone away after her, but I says, "No, Shecktery; no, Shecktery; not this time." We go back together after a bit of a rest and a tankard of ale, at your expense, Mr. Davennan. Terrible 'ot day.

DAVENANT. I can see, Mr. Godby, that you are suffering from the heat. Won't you sit down?

GODBY. I'd like to drop my anchor somewhere.

(*He sits down on a light chair.* DAVENANT *rushes forward.*)

DAVENANT. You'll be more comfortable there, Mr. Godby. (*Puts* GODBY *into settee.*)

GODBY. Thank'ee. Very comfortable chair. But the letters. (*Rises.*) In that 'ere casket.

SEBASTIAN. No, Mr. Godby, there are no letters in that casket. Priscilla's letters are downstairs.

GODBY. Downstairs. I'll wait here. Shecktery . . . letters . . . Shecktery good sort. D'ye 'ear, Mr. Davennan? Shecktery good sort. (*He closes his eyes.* DAVENANT *and* SEBASTIAN *walk aside.*)

DAVENANT. Now, Sebastian, what is all this about?

SEBASTIAN. Martin let this man into the house, and we've been coming back ever since, from ale-house to ale-house.

DAVENANT. A drunken man in this house, and an Austrian Countess in Claremont Villa. These eccentricities are no doubt very amusing, Sebastian, but I shall have to explain to your father——

SEBASTIAN. Explain what you like. I don't care; I'm done for.

DAVENANT. Is it so bad as that? You have told her and——

SEBASTIAN. Just as I was trying to summon up courage to tell her, this fellow came rolling into the house asking for the letters that I had promised to send him. At the word "letters,"

Gabrielle began to grow suspicious, and the garrulous fool that he is, thinking to make matters right, said I hadn't written to Priscilla since they were spliced. What did Gabrielle care whether it was before or after marriage? All that concerned her was the fact that I had sent the poems that I had written to her to this fellow's wife. As soon as she knew that, she just gave me a look. You wouldn't believe that so much hatred could come into that face. She picked up her parasol and ran away.

DAVENANT. And you let her go without any explanation?

SEBASTIAN. As I was about to follow her—is that fellow asleep?

(*Snore from* GODBY.)

DAVENANT. He seems as if he were.

SEBASTIAN. He gripped me by the arm and hung on to me, and a few minutes after I heard the train whistle.

DAVENANT. And she went away still thinking she is married to me? You really must go and tell her.

SEBASTIAN. I don't know where she is.

(*Enter* MARTIN *with a letter, which she hands to* DAVENANT.)

MARTIN (*to* SEBASTIAN). Shall I awake him, sir?

SEBASTIAN. No, no, no-o.

(*Exit* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT (*reading the letter*). She is at the "Three Kings," and is leaving Rockminster to-morrow. You must go and tell her.

SEBASTIAN. Now? At once?

DAVENANT. Why not?

SEBASTIAN. I do not think I can, Lewis. My last chance of getting her forgiveness would be lost if I did.

DAVENANT. Why should it be lost?

SEBASTIAN. Because I must begin at the beginning, by getting her to forgive me for sending my poems to Mrs. Godby.

DAVENANT. You think she looks upon the correspondence with Mrs. Godby as the greater offence?

SEBASTIAN. I don't know whether she does or doesn't, but am certain that when we have persuaded her to forgive one offence, the next will come easy. I can't give reasons, but that's how I feel. Neither of us know what she'll think.

DAVENANT. That's very likely; but why did you say when *we* have persuaded her?

SEBASTIAN. I should have said when you have persuaded her.

DAVENANT. But I am only the secretary.

SEBASTIAN. Don't, Lewis, don't. You will help me, I know you will, and you can do so by sending a note round to the "Three Kings" asking her to come to see you.

DAVENANT. And then?

SEBASTIAN. You will be able to talk her over. The right words will come to you; they always do.

DAVENANT. Would you like me to say that you sent the poems to Priscilla to find out if the British public would like them, Priscilla being the British public in essence?

SEBASTIAN. The very thing, Lewis. I can see you'll be able to manage it all right.

DAVENANT. Would you like me to tell her that I am Lewis Davenant, taking on myself the entire responsibility of sending you to Vienna?

SEBASTIAN. No, I think not. Let us begin at the beginning, and when she has forgiven me the offence (in her eyes the greater offence), put it to her that she should go away with me, it doesn't matter where so long as I get her and myself out of Rockminster, for here——

DAVENANT. Here you are surrounded with relations.

SEBASTIAN. Just so. Will you do this, Lewis? I shall be for ever grateful to you, and the job will not be as hard as it seems. Gabrielle is more sensible than she appears to be at first sight, for all her eccentricity is on the surface, as one soon begins to find out.

DAVENANT. I hadn't thought of it, but I daresay you're right, and that good sense often comes to us in strange clothes, whilst folly, under the dull robes of dignity, finds excellent cover.

SEBASTIAN. I am sure you are right, Lewis, for what you say sounds right. Send a note. She'll come. She won't leave Rockminster without seeing you; and as soon as we are ten miles out of Rockminster I'll tell her everything from end to end without evasion or omission.

DAVENANT. If she stops the carriage and bids you alight?

SEBASTIAN. I don't think she will.

DAVENANT. You speak with assurance. But however fantastic she may be on the surface, or under it, she won't take your piece of news that she has married the wrong man lying down.

SEBASTIAN. If you will do as I ask you——

DAVENANT. I will; for I must. It was I that pushed you into the snare.

SEBASTIAN. I feel like a fly on a sticky paper, but shall extricate myself if you will help me. I have your promise, you will not tell her anything?

DAVENANT. You have my hand on it. Ring the bell, please.

(SEBASTIAN *rings the bell.* DAVENANT *sits down and scribbles a note.*) But she knows your handwriting, Sebastian. You must write the note.

(SEBASTIAN *sits at table and writes. Enter* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. Mr. Dayne is writing a note, and you'll have it sent round to the "Three Kings" at once, Martin. . . . The messenger is to wait for an answer.

MARTIN. Yes, sir.

(*Exit.*)

SEBASTIAN. I think it will work out all right. You are still Sebastian Dayne, and I am Davenant.

DAVENANT. May I ask how long this masquerade is to continue?

SEBASTIAN. Not for long. It can't. Things have come to a crisis. (*Looking towards* GODBY.) We'd better wake him.

DAVENANT. I am afraid we shall have some difficulty in getting rid of him. He won't go without his letters.

SEBASTIAN. I'll get him his letters. (*He goes over to* GODBY.) Now, Mr. Godby, shake your leg; lift your leg.

GODBY (*waking up*). Aye, aye, Captain; aye, aye. Blesh my soul . . . blesh my soul, where am I? (*Getting to his feet.*) Misher Davennan. Shecktery. Long walk. 'Eat of the sun. Arlright. Come back for Priscilla's letters. Shecktery, Priscilla's letters.

SEBASTIAN. Priscilla's letters are downstairs, Mr. Godby.

GODBY. Very well. Get away close hauled, cargo on board, Priscilla's letters, a glass of ale, Mr. Davennan, before starting. Glass of ale does no man any harm.

DAVENANT. You'll give Mr. Godby a glass of ale in the parlour, Sebastian.

GODBY. Thank'ee, Captain, drink yer 'ealth. Fine ale in this country; besh ever drunk. One glass at "Three Fiddlers"—should 'ave been two—two glasses at "Pig and Whistle"—should 'ave been three—four glasses at the "Rose and Crown"—should 'ave been five. England's bulwarks is 'er ale. As long as England brews the ale that I 'ave drunk to-day, England will never be anythin' else but merrie England. (*Begins to sing.*) "Oh! for merrie England and the merrie days of yore."

SEBASTIAN. Come away, and we'll drink Mr. Davenant's health.

GODBY. Yesh. Misher Davennan's 'ealth, Priscilla's 'ealth, Shecktery's 'ealth, everybody's 'ealth. (SEBASTIAN *helps him out. Coming back.*) Won't you join us, Misher Davennan?

DAVENANT. Presently, Mr. Godby, presently.

(SEBASTIAN *pushes* GODBY *off.*)

DAVENANT (*to* SEBASTIAN). What are you going to do in the meantime?

SEBASTIAN. I'll wait upstairs.

DAVENANT. Lady Letham is dining here to-night.

SEBASTIAN. Lady Letham! Ah! she called the day I left, and hopes you will stay with her in Westmoreland. She wishes to show you a fine range of mountains.

DAVENANT. I wrote to her.

SEBASTIAN. But, Lewis, she would prefer to have you to herself, and until I know my fate I shall eat no dinner, and not even then, should it prove adverse.

(*Exit.*)

DAVENANT (*going to the door and speaking to* SEBASTIAN, *who is still on the staircase*). Will you tell Martin that I'd like to speak to her? (*He walks back and forth.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. You did well, Martin, to come up from Claremont Villa.

MARTIN. There was no use my staying on. The Countess caught the train, and Mr. Godby said he wouldn't leave till he had some ale. He made Mr. Dayne drink with him, and they went away together.

DAVENANT. I know, Martin, I know. But we must think now of what we can give Lady Letham for dinner. I daresay Mrs. Coleman will be able to manage a dinner of some sort.

MARTIN. I daresay she will, sir. I know pretty well what is in the house. You can have soup *printanière*, fillets of sole, *vin blanc*, and a spring chicken *en casserole*——

DAVENANT. And a sweet. That will do famously. As Lady Letham does not drink champagne, you had better have a bottle of the best claret warmed for her. The gardener has sent the flowers all right.

MARTIN. Yes, sir. (*She turns to go out, but stops.*)

DAVENANT. Well, what is it?

MARTIN. Only this, sir—are you still Mr. Dayne?

DAVENANT (*pause*). Well, Martin——

MARTIN. You sent round a note to the "Three Kings," sir, asking Mr. Sebastian's friend to come round here—the Countess von—I never caught the name properly, sir, but who will she ask for?

DAVENANT. She will ask for Mr. Dayne.

MARTIN. And Lady Letham, sir?

DAVENANT. She will ask for Mr. Davenant.

MARTIN. You'll excuse me, sir, but you have tied your tie very badly.

DAVENANT. Yes, I have tied it rather badly. That drunken fellow coming in at the moment. (*Ties tie before the glass.*) I think that is better.

MARTIN. Yes, sir, that's quite right.

DAVENANT. Is there anything else?

MARTIN. No. (*A bell rings.*) The front door bell, sir.

(*Exit* MARTIN. *She returns a moment after, followed by* GABRIELLE.)

GABRIELLE. How do you do, Mr. Davenant, and you see how running round I come to meet you eagerly; but this is not your writing. (*Hands him the letter.*)

DAVENANT (*takes letter and looks at it*). This letter is in Mr. Davenant's writing.

GABRIELLE. Ach, let no more time be wasted putting jokes on each other, not just now. This morning I was all for making jokes, for I thought I was going to remain in England, and that there would be plenty of time for reconciliation, plenty of time for laughing, and saying which had made the greatest fool of the other; but now it is all sad and gloomy.

DAVENANT. I really do not understand.

GABRIELLE. Oh, yes, you do understand, and quite truly you do, Mr. Davenant, so you must not tease me any more, nor must I tease you, Mr. Davenant, for it is all too sad. But let that

pass away. We will not talk of those things any more, for it would be useless, since I am going back to Austria.

DAVENANT. Going back to Austria! But when?

GABRIELLE. To-morrow or next day; and I've come here to-night because I could not go back to Austria without seeing the great author, Mr. Davenant, whose books have been so much help to me at a time when my life has gone to wreckage. All this was spoken of lightly this morning, but my humour is not the same; it never is the same very long. But there has been great cause, which I will tell you about. But that will not be necessary, as perhaps you have heard the story already from him. Ach, I can tell by your face that you have. So it may be wrong of me to come here; but I could not go without seeing Mr. Davenant as he is. For this morning you were not Mr. Davenant, but merely Mr. Davenant masquerading as—as your secretary; so if I had not come here to-night I should never have seen the real Mr. Davenant. But now I have seen him and the room in which he wrote all those lovely books which—but we'll say no more about those books. Yet why not, for all the rest has finished. I am glad that it was here you wrote your books, and not in that horrid Claremont Villa, which I shall try to forget. But this room I shall remember. (*She walks round the room, looking at the pictures.*) You have some lovely pictures, and if I were not going away in a few minutes I'd ask you to explain them to me, for you explain pictures very well in your books. Your china I understand bet-

ter; you have some lovely Dresden, but I do not want to talk about such things; and if I look at them it is only because they will help me to remember you better. And now, dear Mr. Davenant, say: I forgive Gabrielle as Gabrielle forgives me, which is quite true.

DAVENANT. My dear Countess, you must not go like this. A foolish thought came into my head. One should not be judged by one's foolish thoughts. I don't know how it all happened that——

GABRIELLE. That you sent your secretary instead of coming yourself? Such a rude thing to do, and just at a time when I was saying every day: "I'd die to know more about him." And it is not better; it is worse since I have seen you. Yes, I think it is so.

DAVENANT. But, Countess, tell me. You cannot go away like this, for we have much to say to each other, so much that I hardly know where to begin or how to——

GABRIELLE. What, you, the great author, not to know how to begin a story. I can stay a little while longer to hear you try.

DAVENANT. What would you have me talk to you about?

GABRIELLE. About yourself, or I'll not stay another minute. I have been told that you go on writing from morning to night. Why do you do it? Really, I must scold you a little. I do not want you to fall ill. You may write four or five hours a day, but no more, and you must go for long walks. If I were living in this

house I should send you out for two hours every day at least. This to me you must promise.

DAVENANT. Am I forgiven?

GABRIELLE. Yes, if you promise.

DAVENANT. I promise. How good you are. Mine was the original offence.

GABRIELLE. We will not talk about who began and who ended. I came here to-night, for I could not leave England with unfriendliness for the author of *Elizabeth Cooper*. I said in my letters, which you did not read, I will be in love with the author, not the man, a thing I did not mean at the time, but for the future I will think only of the author.

DAVENANT. My dear Countess, I should not like you to forget the man—not altogether. I cannot reconcile myself to becoming an intellectual abstraction, represented by seventeen volumes.

GABRIELLE. But they are such beautiful volumes. (*She turns to go.*)

DAVENANT. No, do not go. We must not part before we have laid aside the absurd disguises in which we have hidden ourselves, each from the other.

GABRIELLE. But I am speaking my heart open to you.

DAVENANT. A disguise is not rent and cast off in an hour. We must have patience. In a few minutes we shall be speaking

out of our true selves. (*Detaining her.*) You have not told me yet when you discovered that I had sent my secretary——

GABRIELLE. Why do you want to know? Whether I took five minutes or one hour, what can it matter?

DAVENANT. A great deal, for the discovery in five minutes means one woman, and the discovery in an hour means another.

GABRIELLE. And which would you prefer me to be?

DAVENANT. You were returning to Vienna with the Baron von Allmen and two ladies, and it was in the train——

GABRIELLE. All that was my invention, part of the prank. But why do you make me talk of what will always be a very sad story to me?

DAVENANT. If you did not meet Sebastian in the train, he called on you, I suppose, one afternoon; and you were disappointed the moment he came into the room, for Sebastian did not correspond with the idea that you had formed of the man who had written *Elizabeth Cooper*. But the feeling of disappointment passed quickly into one of delight.

GABRIELLE. Now you're making up a story, and I cannot wait to hear it. You will send it to me. (*Rises.*) It was fortunate for himself that he came to me before going to the theatre, for how could he be mistaken for the author of *Elizabeth Cooper?* No, never. My discovery saved him from disgrace, and the piece from being withdrawn, as it might have been. Ach! I wish you

had seen our performance of *Elizabeth Cooper*. You missed a great deal, Mr. Davenant, by not coming to Vienna.

DAVENANT. I did indeed. There is a puritan in the play——

GABRIELLE. We have no puritans in Vienna, and that is perhaps why we can act them so well. Why did you not come to Vienna to see your puritan? (*Sits.*)

DAVENANT. But you are not a puritan, Countess.

GABRIELLE. I'm talking now of your play. We should have sat in a box watching the performance, and afterwards we should have gone to supper at my cousin's, who has the *feu sacré* and a lovely mouth.

DAVENANT. So the meeting in the train was merely one of your imaginations, Countess; and what about the banquet and the laurel crown?

GABRIELLE. All my imaginations on the battlements of the Castle of Heidelberg——

DAVENANT. And the old priest, was he, too, one of your inventions?

GABRIELLE. We were married on an island in the Danube by an old priest just as he told you.

DAVENANT. But he married you, I see, in his own name, and not in mine.

GABRIELLE. Yes, in his own name. But that will make no difference, none whatever. I shall return to Austria, and my lawyers will tell me if I'm married. But let us not talk of these

painful things, Mr. Davenant, I beg of you, for, as I have said, I would leave Rockminster with one pleasant memory at least, and the time I have spent in this room, if you will not talk any more of unpleasant people and things, will be a pleasant memory in time to come. (*Rises.*)

DAVENANT (*rises*). No, you must not go. I would convince you that I meant only a little misunderstanding which would be cleared up in half an hour—in a day or two at most.

GABRIELLE. I, too, meant only a little harmless joke, and we have forgiven each other mutually, have we not? So why go back on that old story?

DAVENANT (*detaining her*). But I did not foresee that you would fall in love with him—how could I?

GABRIELLE. I do not wish to speak of him.

DAVENANT. Nor do I. It is true that I sent him to Vienna on a false errand, but he had no right to return to Rockminster and allow you—and encourage you, perhaps—to put a joke upon me. He is my cousin, and is many years younger.

GABRIELLE (*with a change of tone*). Mr. Davenant, you do not know me yet at all. How could you know me, for have we not come out of a masquerade, and not yet laid aside our clothes, as you have said? But if you should come to know me better, the first thing that you will learn about me is that I am not cruel—no, certainly I am not. Of course, I often offend people, sometimes even mortally; my temper is not very good, but when I

think of it I have a great wish to be kind to everybody, even to him who sent my poems to Mrs. Godby. So I beg you to believe me that the joke, the hoax, the humbug—What is a hoax, Mr. Davenant?

DAVENANT. Much the same as humbug.

GABRIELLE. Must not be blamed to him, for the joke was mine, and was put on you in spite of all he could say. I would have my joke now; for at that time I was thinking of you as *un vieux farceur*, who would deserve to be hoaxed. But now I think quite differently. (*Looking round.*) If I were to live here I should move the sofa, for there is too much glare; and bowls of flowers I would have, and cushions. You have been in love many times, Mr. Davenant—one can see that by this room, though there are too few cushions. How long have you been without cushions? Well, no matter. You must forgive Sebastian. You two must not go on quarelling about Gabrielle. No woman is worth that two such men as you should be quarrelling about her. You must promise, for the thought of it would make me very sad when I am far away in Vienna. You cannot refuse me what I ask.

DAVENANT. My dear Countess, you are asking me to promise to do something that you cannot do yourself.

GABRIELLE. But you have nothing to forgive him, only a prank; and he couldn't do else than as I told him. You two must go on writing heaps of books together, just as if Gabrielle

had never written her letters, as if she had never crossed your lives.

DAVENANT. But if you had forgiven him you would not return to Vienna.

GABRIELLE. I forgive him for coming to see me as Lewis Davenant, but I cannot forgive him for sending my poems—but let us not go over the hateful story again.

DAVENANT. I understand, or I think I do. You are angry, for it seems to you but an accident that he didn't go to Southampton instead of Vienna.

GABRIELLE. Which might well have been. Tell me, isn't it so? I don't want to tease you. I only want to know.

DAVENANT. I should be a false friend if I failed to remind you that one woman inspires the poems that all women receive.

GABRIELLE. Laura inspired all Petrarch's sonnets, and they were circulated in manuscript.

DAVENANT. In print, but not in manuscript.

GABRIELLE. Then there was no print; but I will not argue with you, Mr. Davenant. I am not in the humour to argue with anybody about such a thing as Petrarch and Sebastian.

DAVENANT. Quite true; let us not argue, but forgive him.

GABRIELLE. No, that is not possible. There are things that cannot be. Were I to say I forgive him, my forgiveness would be merely words. It would not come from the heart. No; and now I must say good-bye. I really must go. (*She goes up stage,*

pauses a moment, and then returns.) But, Mr. Davenant, one thing more. To please your curiosity, I will tell you that when Sebastian came to see me I knew after the first five minutes that he was a friend of yours, your secretary, your cousin,—anyway, not yourself. And now you will tell me something. Why did you not come to Vienna?

DAVENANT. I do not know myself.

GABRIELLE. That is a trick not to tell me that you are in love.

DAVENANT. No, I am not. You would know why I didn't go to Vienna? It seems to me that I dreaded a hoax—that some of my friends here might have planned the letters.

GABRIELLE. What madness! My letters should have told you. But you didn't read them.

DAVENANT. If I had I should have gone.

GABRIELLE. But that was not the only reason for not going.

DAVENANT. There are always many reasons. Sebastian chided me for unwillingness to sacrifice a few pages of prose. But that was not the reason. I think the real reason was my incurable shyness . . . hatred of the incongruous. I said if I were ten years younger I'd go.

GABRIELLE. Did I not say in my letters I did not like young men?

DAVENANT. You did. (*Detaining her.*) Many women write to authors about their books and ask for appointments, and if I

have not accepted these invitations it is because I never could put the thought out of my mind that I should find a withered spinster waiting who would extend a sisterly hand to me, saying: I understand you, and you understand me; let us go under the willows and weep.

GABRIELLE. But after looking at my miniature you needn't have feared to find a wrinkled face waiting for you.

DAVENANT. You forget that your miniature did not arrive till the last moment, after all arrangements had been made, and Sebastian was about to start.

GABRIELLE. No, I do not forget. But there were two miniatures, and you told me this morning that you had given the head and shoulders to him and kept the naughty miniature for yourself. And I must know at once if my naughty miniature, which is quite a disgrace, gave you much pleasure, Mr. Davenant?

DAVENANT. It did indeed. Your miniature and your letters——

GABRIELLE. Ah, so you read my letters while—— But what have you done with my miniature? You said this morning that it was not at Claremont Villa, so it must be here, then. Let me see my miniature.

DAVENANT. Shall I show it to you?

GABRIELLE. Why not? You think I might be shocked; but one is not shocked at oneself; or do you think we should not look

at the miniature together? Perhaps you are right; but fetch it all the same.

(DAVENANT *goes over to bureau in the corner of the room and opens a drawer. He returns with the miniature.*)

GABRIELLE. So you keep it locked up faithfully. Come, dear Mr. Davenant, and sit on the sofa beside me, and we will look at our miniature together. (*They sit.*) Well, you do not speak. It doesn't seem to you like me at all? Is that the reason of your silence?

DAVENANT. No, not exactly. You see, I know you only in a hat and feathers. If you will take off your hat——

GABRIELLE. I should have to take off more than my hat to look like a goddess. And now tell me, do you like goddesses or real women, Mr. Davenant?

DAVENANT. If a man doesn't see the goddess in the woman, he does not love her.

GABRIELLE. But goddesses are so different in different countries. In our museums they are thin when they come from Italy, and fat when they arrive from Amsterdam. Do you like very young women—mere childs? I hope you do, for it was said that I looked like seventeen when sitting for that miniature.

DAVENANT. The artist who painted it had a great deal of talent. Who was he?

GABRIELLE. It was not a he; it was a she; nor would I sit to a man in veils. Now, Mr. Davenant, if you go on looking at that

miniature you will say something naughty. Give it to me. (*She puts the miniature into the bodice of her dress.*)

DAVENANT. You gave it to me. It is mine; and it is the only thing that I have to remind me of you.

GABRIELLE. Do you wish to be reminded of your cowardice? Men seldom do. (*Rises and turns towards the door.* DAVENANT *intercepts her.*)

DAVENANT. No, you must give me back my property. Nothing goes from this room that comes into it.

GABRIELLE. Your property, Mr. Davenant? You speak to me as if I were a thief.

DAVENANT. Forgive me, but I must have my miniature.

GABRIELLE. You are thinking, not of me, but of your museum, for your house is like one. Is that so, Mr. Davenant?

DAVENANT. To some extent, yes.

GABRIELLE. Well, then, come and walk round this room with me and show me your little museum.

DAVENANT. The house that might have been yours.

GABRIELLE. But you did not come to Vienna! Ah, here is a portrait of yourself, and very like you. I am very glad your hair is turning grey, and I am glad you have moustaches and not drooping ones. That would be dreadful, for you have a horse's face. My face is like a cat's.

DAVENANT (*still pursuing her*). You must give me my miniature.

GABRIELLE. But why are you so greedy for this miniature? For I am a goddess in it, and you do not want a goddess, Mr. Davenant. You like natural things. I am freckled under the ear, where I always freckle. See! (*She shows him her ear.*)

DAVENANT. The freckles make a beautiful neck still more desirable (*she draws away*) by their naturalness.

GABRIELLE. I would keep the miniature and have the painter add some freckles. Do goddesses freckle, Mr. Davenant, or is it too cold up there for freckles?

DAVENANT. Gabrielle, listen. You did not write to Sebastian. You wrote to me. It was an accident that——

GABRIELLE. Ach! that horrid word—accident!

DAVENANT. The time has come to speak seriously. I would not play Sebastian false, but you do not love him, so you say. You are leaving him—returning to Vienna.

GABRIELLE. I did not say that I was returning to Vienna, not at once. I am going to Paris, to Dieppe, to Trouville, or some tiny little fishing village where I can bathe without being seen, which is what I like, for it gives me *des crampes* of every kind to think that somebody is watching me rise out of the seas in a seagown which is most unbecoming, exaggerating all one's little roundnesses.

DAVENANT. Which would not matter in your case, for you are as slight in nature as in the miniature which I must have.

GABRIELLE (*taking the miniature from her bosom, but hold-*

ing it behind her back). Now which would you prefer—to have the miniature to look at while I am away, or to come to see me when I return to Vienna?

DAVENANT. I may go abroad in the autumn, and we might meet in Venice.

GABRIELLE. It would be nice to meet you in Venice, and to sit in a gondola looking at the moon and listening to that noisy Italian music that would be dreadful elsewhere; but in Venice one likes it, and you could tell me your troubles holding my hand.

DAVENANT (*going to her*). Gabrielle, is this a promise?

GABRIELLE. Why should we not meet in Vienna? Everybody meets in Venice.

DAVENANT. But you said to hold your hand.

GABRIELLE. If I had not the miniature in my hand you might hold it now.

DAVENANT. Well, then, put back the miniature into your bodice.

(*She puts the miniature back into her bodice.*)

GABRIELLE. Now you can hold my hand, Mr. Davenant.

DAVENANT. Remember that I am flesh and blood, and were I to go to Vienna I might ask you to love me.

GABRIELLE. Does one ask?

DAVENANT. I suppose not. (*He takes her in his arms.*)

GABRIELLE. We aren't in Vienna yet. (*He holds her.*) No, no, you must not kiss me.

DAVENANT. If you would not have me kiss you, why did you ask me to meet you in Vienna?

GABRIELLE. I do not know.

DAVENANT. A woman always knows. A man doesn't.

GABRIELLE. I swear, Mr. Davenant, that I do not know why——

DAVENANT. Yes, you do. Why did you come here to-night?

GABRIELLE. I do not know—an impulse. I am full of impulses.

DAVENANT. Turn your head and let me kiss you.

GABRIELLE. No, not on the mouth. (*He kisses her.*) Had I known that you would kiss me by force I would not have come here.

DAVENANT. But you are not angry?

GABRIELLE. No, not angry.

DAVENANT. Worse still—disappointed?

GABRIELLE. A man is always wrong to kiss a woman against her will.

DAVENANT. Gabrielle, I had to kiss you.

GABRIELLE. Did you desire it so much as that?

DAVENANT. An obligation incurred to Sebastian.

GABRIELLE. To kiss me!

DAVENANT. Yes, for only through my kiss could the truth be made known to you.

GABRIELLE. What truth?

DAVENANT. That you came here in anger, with an idea in your mind of revenge. Sebastian sent your poems to Mrs. Godby, and in somewhat vulgar parlance you came here determined to get even with him. But you couldn't, for you love your husband.

GABRIELLE. I think I hate you, Mr. Davenant.

DAVENANT. But why should you hate me?

GABRIELLE. I do not like sly men.

DAVENANT. Sly?

GABRIELLE. Yes, sly, for you would have me believe that your kiss was only intended to prove that I still love Sebastian.

DAVENANT. If you didn't love Sebastian, you would have kissed me.

GABRIELLE. Do you think so? Tell me why you think so. Tell me, Mr. Davenant, if it was only to wring the truth out of me that you kissed me, or are we still playing at comedy?

DAVENANT. In this world we are always playing a comedy of some sort, for nothing is quite true and nothing is altogether false. (*He rings the bell.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

DAVENANT. Will you tell Mr. Dayne that I should like to speak to him?

GABRIELLE. So you think that I shall kiss and be friends again with my husband?

DAVENANT. I will not say I am sure, for one is sure of nothing.

GABRIELLE. And if I refuse, what then?

DAVENANT. You will lose an obedient lover, for when Sebastian returned here with Godby and I offered to relieve him of the tedium of telling you he was not the author of *Elizabeth Cooper*, he begged of me to tell you nothing.

GABRIELLE. That is a point in his favour; but why have you picked up that book, and why are you reading it? It isn't polite to read while you are talking to me.

DAVENANT. This book is an advance copy of his poems, and it is another point in his favour, for you will find all the poems dedicated to you. (*She takes the book of poems and looks through them.*) But one moment, Sebastian will be here in a few minutes. Give me my miniature.

GABRIELLE. I sent you this miniature before I married Sebastian, and I do not think you should have it.

DAVENANT. It seems to me that I have earned that miniature.

GABRIELLE. Well, perhaps you have, but let Sebastian never see it. (*She gives him the miniature.*)

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN.)

DAVENANT. Sebastian, I have good news for you. The Countess is prepared to forgive you.

GABRIELLE. Is disposed to forgive him?

SEBASTIAN (*to* GABRIELLE). You see now that all I told you of my cousin is true. But I did not praise enough. He is a kind,

a good, and a true friend, and a great genius, for if he weren't he would never have persuaded you out of your cruel humour.

DAVENANT. Criticism and reproaches are from this moment forbidden, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN. I won't offend again, but how *did* you persuade her?

DAVENANT. I would not anticipate my old age, for in my old age I look forward to telling the story of the Countess's yielding to my persuasian when you both come from some distant country—Austria, perhaps Italy—bringing with you the children that I heard spoken of this morning, not forgetting the go-carts, the perambulator, the rocking-horses, and the hoops—all the shows of their happiness.

GABRIELLE. And how would you like the children to be—two little girls, or two little boys? Two little girls, dear Mr. Davenant; but I am not sure that myself and Sebastian would not prefer them mixed. But we will do all we can to oblige—shall we not, Sebastian? And now wilt thou be jealous if I kiss dear Mr. Davenant for all he has done for us?

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN. Lady Letham, sir.

(*Enter* LADY LETHAM.)

DAVENANT. How do you do, Lady Letham? Let me introduce you to the Countess von Hoenstadt and to her husband, Mr. Sebastian Dayne, whom I think you have already met.

LADY LETHAM (*to* GABRIELLE). I am glad that Mr. Dayne did not return from Germany empty-handed.

GABRIELLE. No, indeed he didn't, and I'm afraid that I've already proved myself somewhat of a handful. You do say somewhat of a handful in English, Lady Letham?

LADY LETHAM. We do. How well the Countess von Hoenstadt speaks English, Mr. Dayne.

MARTIN. Dinner is served, sir.

DAVENANT (*he gives* LADY LETHAM *his arm and turns to speak to* SEBASTIAN). If you choose to follow us, Lady Letham and I will be delighted to have your company; but it may be that you would prefer your company to ours, in which case you can take the Countess back to the "Three Kings"; and after dinner you can catch the last train back to Claremont Villa and spend the rest of your honeymoon there, if you like, unless you would prefer to go farther afield. The Countess was speaking to me just now of Paris, Trouville, and Etretat; but these things you must decide for yourself. Meanwhile the soup is getting cold.

(*Exeunt* LADY LETHAM *and* DAVENANT.)

SEBASTIAN. Say which you would prefer, Gabrielle—to dine here or with me alone at the "Three Kings"?

GABRIELLE. I have no thought for dinner just now. Let us sit for a while and talk. (*She goes towards the sofa and sits. He follows her.*) Read me your poems. (*Hands him the book.*)

SEBASTIAN. My book.

GABRIELLE. An advance copy. (*He begins to read.*)

(*Curtain*)